

Community and Nation

The Representation of the Village in French Landscape Painting

1870-1890

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification except as specified.

Signature:..

Date: 2.12.05

Abstract

The thesis considers the motif of the village and the significance of its role amid the profusion of rural landscape paintings in France during the period 1870-1890. Its aim is to determine the extent to which the popularity of the motif among both artists and audiences articulated contemporary artistic, social and political conditions. The subject is treated thematically with each chapter presenting a contextual argument and followed by a corresponding case study.

After establishing the topic and methodology of the thesis, the introduction distinguishes the type of painting to be considered. It clarifies firstly what was considered a 'village' by the nineteenth century audience, and subsequently what can be termed a 'village landscape'. The second chapter then examines reasons for the appeal of the village landscape both from the standpoint of aesthetic theory and contextual influences. Particular attention is paid to the marketing of the village landscape in the Parisian art world. The following case study contrasts the differing success of Claude Monet and Henri Harpignies in painting similar types of village iconography.

The following three chapters consider specific components of the motif. Beginning with the significance of geographical location, chapter three contemplates the characteristics which different regions lent to the iconography. The particularly popular Breton village of Pont-Aven is developed as an example. Chapter four looks at depictions of the generalised French village as an idealised working community, contrasting it with the more immediate concerns affecting rural France at that time. This is followed by an analysis of Alfred Sisley's paintings of Saint-Mammès and its canal activity. Chapter five then complements this theme by examining the significance of the village at rest. It focuses on images where the village is

represented as a place of respite and shelter for the worker, but also where it indicates inactivity, closing and even death. Jean-Charles Cazin's paintings of villages at twilight serve to demonstrate the loaded nature of such imagery.

The final chapter concludes by attempting to define the archetypal village, and summarising the variety of values and associations that even the most simplified motif could encapsulate for the nineteenth-century French artist and his audience.

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Chapter One

Introducing the ‘Village Landscape’

As such an innate feature of the rural landscape, the presence and function of villages in paintings have rarely been questioned. Often a small and subtle addition, their role within the composition and narrative of many images is nonetheless focal. Particularly toward the end of the nineteenth century, they became a prevalent feature of landscape paintings by a wide range of French artists of differing social and artistic backgrounds. While the individual places depicted were often obscure, the similarities in the ways that they were portrayed reveal the importance of the French village as a generic motif. Although such images were not a direct representation of the urban bourgeois society that produced and consumed them, their popularity demonstrates the resonance of the ideas they evoked. In considering the evolving motif amid the social, political and artistic contexts in which it was created, therefore, we find a vivid reflection of changing contemporary attitudes and beliefs.

The turbulent years of the early Third Republic, which will form the subject of this thesis, provide a particularly interesting dialogue between the fluctuations of cultural change and the nuances surrounding the village in art. Like much of the nineteenth century, this period between 1870 and 1890 was set against the social backdrop of urban industrialisation and rural decline. The more specific political circumstances affecting the nation at this time were also highly significant. The 1870s were overshadowed by the political insecurity and national despondency endured in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71. The resulting austerity of Marshal MacMahon’s presiding regime reverberated through many aspects of French life, including the officialdom of the Paris art world. In contrast, the Opportunist Republic elected in 1879 promoted liberalism in the arts and nationalist pride

among the French population. However, the State's resolute policies towards secularisation and centralisation, coupled with the concerns brought about by agricultural and economic recession, meant that the 1880s were also rife with social and political controversy. The concurrent proliferation of paintings of rural villages emerging during this relatively condensed period makes it an effective time frame in which to explore the implications of the motif in full. Examining the different components of the village, and the nuances and emphases affected by the artists, this thesis will appraise the extent to which the image of the rural community reflected the sentiments and values of the national community during these two decades. As an introduction, this chapter will begin by defining the essential aspects of the subject and qualifying the main objectives of the thesis. A discussion of methodology will then consider the range of sources used in achieving these aims and clarify the form that the study will take.

Definitions

The large number of French landscape paintings produced during the period 1870-1890 means that the topic selected for this thesis could encompass a potentially vast range of paintings. There were, of course, a large number of French villages and, it seems, almost as many artists willing to paint them. In attempting to pinpoint the ideas that the motif represented, however, artists' preconceptions were in themselves somewhat limiting. In seeking to clarify the nineteenth-century definition of the term 'village', many specific characteristics and connotations come to light. The purpose of this section, therefore, will be to identify first the essential characteristics of the paintings to be considered by defining the intrinsic meanings associated with the 'village' and 'village landscape'. It will then highlight the main issues that the village motif evoked and responded to within its contextual setting.

To finish it will outline the key questions arising in interpreting village landscapes and the central themes to be considered by the present thesis.

The classification of the term ‘village’ is essential to this study; however, the literal explanations of what a village consists of are rather vague and open-ended. Pierre Larousse’s *Grand dictionnaire universel*, published between 1865 and 1878, classifies ‘village’ as a ‘réunion d’habitations moins considérable qu’une ville, mais plus grande qu’un hameau.’¹ His definition of the term by exclusion rather than by any positive attributes, succinctly demonstrates the wide variety of settlements that it was applied to during the second half of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, the apparent simplicity of applying such distinctions is marred when one finds that in both contemporary and modern texts, the terms ‘town’, ‘village’ and ‘hamlet’ are frequently used interchangeably with reference to the same place. Evelyn Ackerman, for example, in her study of the growth of Bonnières entitled *Village on the Seine*, refers to the settlement as a ‘village’ and as a ‘town’, even on the same page.²

From an art historical perspective too, texts often differ as to how to categorise the places that artists chose to paint. In discussing the artist colony at Pont-Aven, for example, texts are inconclusive as to whether the place is a town or a village.³ Similarly, the community of Barbizon in the Forest of Fontainebleau has been classed as a ‘small town’, a ‘village’ and sometimes as a ‘hamlet’.⁴ Arguably, the difference in terminology is of little relevance in such instances, as commentators concentrate on other aspects of artists’ lives and work. With regard to landscape iconography, the distinction made most often is the disparity between the

¹ LAROUSSE, 1865-1878, XV, p.1046

² ACKERMAN, 1978, p.92

³ e.g. Pont-Aven is referred to as a ‘town’ in MacQUOID, 1877, p.250; and a ‘village’ in VERNON, 1884, p.426. Discussed further in Ch.3 of the present thesis.

⁴ e.g. Schaefer, S., refers to Barbizon as a ‘small town’ in his essay “The French Landscape Sensibility” in BRETTELL & SCHAEFER, 1984, pp.53-78 at 58; in REWALD, 1980, p.17 it is identified as a ‘village’; and in GREEN, 1990, p.116 it is described in the first instance as a ‘tiny hamlet’.

Parisian and the provincial environments.⁵ In doing so, however, authors subconsciously render all types of living under the latter indistinct. The title to one of Robert Herbert's essays, for instance, is "City vs. Country: The Rural Image in French Painting from Millet to Gauguin", and not "City vs. village".⁶ This thesis will argue, however, that as a sub-genre of the rather all-encompassing 'rural' category of imagery, the 'village landscape' had its own particular significance. In contrasting the practical definitions of the 'village' against the paintings of the period, it is clear that popular nineteenth-century perceptions were rather more specific and elaborate than the practical classifications. Analysis of both the visual and literal definitions of the 'village' will therefore help to define not only the type of painting to be considered, but also the ways in which they could be perceived. The nuances and connotations that the notion of the village evoked to the nineteenth-century artists and their audiences will be fundamental to understanding and interpreting the motif.

With the largest proportion of communities in France falling under the general classification of 'village' during the nineteenth century, it is not surprising that Larousse's definition was so broad and all-encompassing. It is possible, however, to determine some of the implied attributes of the village by his suggested process of elimination. The distinctions between the hamlet and the village, for example, are largely functional, in that the former is not independent, having no central amenities such as a church, market place, or *mairie*. Larousse's description of the hamlet depicts it as a collection of houses built at random, even specifying a lack of strategic defences.⁷ Indeed, the role of local centre is one of the defining characteristics of the village. In rural imagery too, this aspect offers both a visual and symbolic focal point within the panoramic landscape, as in the French social historian Albert Dauzat's description: 'Qu'ils sont avenants et d'aspects variés nos villages de France, piqués

⁵ e.g. BRETTELL & SCHAEFER, 1984, *passim*

⁶ HERBERT, 2002, pp.23-48

⁷ LAROUSSE, 1865-1878, IX, p.46

de leur clocher à flèche ou couronnés d'une tour moyenâgeuse...'⁸ It is often the case in paintings of rural landscapes that the village, and in particular the church steeple, offers an apex to the horizon or a centre to the field of vision. Léo Gausson's neo-impressionist painting *Le clocher de Bussy-Saint-Georges*, c.1889 (fig.1), is a typical demonstration of this type of composition.

The role of the village church was highly significant as a practical and political focus to the area. It was a marker of religious authority as the centre of a parish and acted as a hub for social and to some extent administrative affairs. Throughout the nineteenth-century, however, many of the churches' public roles and authority were ceded to the *mairies*. The transferral of power was particularly contentious during the Third Republic as the State pressed for the complete secularisation of public institutions, thus reducing the authority of the Catholic Church. Marriages, the registration of births and deaths, and most controversially the overseeing of education, all became matters of state for the local mayor. Rather than the 'parish', the State's secular equivalent was the 'commune' – the smallest official administrative unit, encompassing both the village and its surrounding farms and hamlets. Controlled directly by sub-prefects and mayors, it was situated at the bottom of the hierarchy, falling under the more general power of the municipality, the department, the region and then the State. Amid the Third Republic disputes over secularity, therefore, the term 'village' was conveniently equivocal. Rather than being an official categorization with set boundaries and designated functions like the 'parish' or the 'commune' it unified a community which oscillated around two main political centres: the *mairie* and the church.

Whereas a village can be distinguished from a hamlet mainly through its administrative functions, differentiating it from a town appears to have been less straightforward. The ambiguity is visible in some paintings, for example, the Lyonnais artist Adolphe Appian's

⁸ DAUZAT, 1941, p.26

painting *Rue de village sous la pluie* (fig.2). Apart from its title, the subject could easily be mistaken for the outskirts of a town, with its tall and rather modern-looking buildings. In practical terms, while several towns could be easily identified by their appointment of a prefect and status as the centre of a municipality, this was not an exhaustive test, as some towns only had communal status. Other factors were even less clear cut. More than one church, or perhaps a more important and larger church, might promote what would otherwise seem like a village to the status of a town. A larger market, or economic strength, might also have influenced perceptions. Equally, the size of the place itself, and of its population, was one of the most common defining factors; however, there were no official limits to classify any specific number of inhabitants required for either a town or a village. The historian Robert Tombs, rather than differentiating the town from the village, divides the latter into two categories: the ‘urban village’ and the smaller more dispersed settlement. The former he describes as ‘bourgs’ containing 1500-5000 inhabitants, saying that they were typical of the Paris basin, the north and east of France, and of the Garonne basin and Rhône valley.⁹ This terminology is useful in that it allows for the sudden growth that some villages were undergoing during periods of rapid industrial change. Bonnières, to the north-west of Paris, is one example, its evolution from a rural village to a prosperous manufacturing town analysed in detail by Ackerman.¹⁰ Paul Cézanne’s painting *Vue de Bonnières*, from 1866 (fig.3), also appears to reflect the transition. The tall industrial chimney protruding from the cluster of houses seems to compete in prominence against the spire of the village church. Framed by both rural countryside and telegraph wires, the identity of the place appears in flux.

The more one approaches the ‘urban’, however, particularly in reference to the larger ‘bourgs’, there is a sense of departure from the true nineteenth-century understanding of the

⁹ TOMBS, 1996, p.234

¹⁰ see ACKERMAN, 1978

word 'village'. Villages were increasingly being considered for their dissimilarity to the larger urban settlements. Apart from its blurred resemblance to the definition of 'town', the 'urban village' in Tombs's terms might include, for instance, the Parisian suburbs. Although the administrative structure may have been the same as in other types of village, in general they were more popularly distinguished as the '*banlieue*'. The *banlieue* was representative of an emerging type of modern settlement, both or neither town and/or village and was regarded as a separate category. The mixture of the modern urban and rural environment was exploited by many of the more *avant garde* artists, most notably the Impressionists in the 1870s. In the 1880s too, the ambiguities of the *banlieue*'s status were still being made a feature in artists' works. Jean-François Raffaëlli's paintings of the Parisian suburbs make it clearly apparent, for example, *La Gitane*, 1882 (fig.4), with its juxtaposition of cottage and factory, field and rubbish tip. *Banlieue de Paris*, 1890 (fig.5), is another example, with the telegraph pole counterbalancing the tree and church spire, confirming the somewhat contradictory title to this predominantly rural setting. Such paintings should be scrutinised separately and will not be dealt with in the current thesis. It is necessary to recognise, however, that although the distinction between *banlieue* and village is difficult to define, the perceptions behind the imagery of each were very different. For the purposes of this thesis, therefore, one must not only look at the contents of a settlement to discover whether it is a village or not, but consider also its function and surrounding environment, in other words, its character as a 'rural' community.

The social scientist Michael Bunce cites the Oxford Dictionary in defining a village as 'a centre of habitation in a country district.'¹¹ In many contexts, the association of the village with the 'rural' landscape is inseparable. Indeed, for the purposes of defining 'village' it is important to note that it did not consist solely of buildings. Whether coastal or inland, an essential characteristic in identifying a village was often its relationship to the surrounding

¹¹ BUNCE, 1982, p.28

natural resources. In some paintings, therefore, it is possible to identify a street as that of a rural village, even where there is no representation of the surrounding countryside. Edmond Petitjean's *Une rue à Liverdun (Lorraine)*, 1885 (fig.6), for example, can be perceived as such just by the rustic buildings, the earthen street and the hens and piles of hay dotted throughout, all emphasizing the village's close connection to the rural environment. Buildings could also be assumed to be provincial or rural by the emphasis of regional characteristics, setting them apart from the modern urban stylisation.¹² Petitjean's painting demonstrates clearly the broad oak eaves and low pantiled roofs typical of Lorraine. Figures in local costume were also often used to this effect and indicated that the places were full of tradition, old and long-established, again an important contrast to the city environment. The 'village' was not just a group of houses set in a non-urban location, as exemplified by Claude Monet's painting of the suburban *Maisons d'Argenteuil*, 1873 (fig.7). It was a characterisation of its setting and intrinsically attached to, built from and dependent on, the landscape. Instead of representing the purely natural, or the purely urban, therefore, the 'village landscape' is representative of a specific juncture between the two – a dialectic combination of the natural and the man-made.

The actual or implied function of man within the terrain is consequently a pivotal factor in defining the 'village' and the 'village landscape'. Whereas Tombs cites the definition of the 'rural inhabitant' as a person living in a commune 'whose main centre of population had fewer than 2000 inhabitants', in practice it appears that the inhabitants had far more of an active role in determining how the place was perceived.¹³ A recent *Larousse de Poche* dictionary, for instance, defines a 'village' as a place where the inhabitants live principally from the land, in contrast to a 'town' where the majority are involved in commerce.¹⁴ The role of figures within the landscape is an essential part of many village landscapes; an

¹² See DAUZAT, 1941, pp.41-60

¹³ TOMBS, 1996, p.233

¹⁴ LAROUSSE, 1993, p.699

implicit part of village imagery. The insertion of a man with a scythe in Léon Lhermitte's *Rue de Mont-Saint-Père*, 1875 (fig.8), for example, immediately marks him as an agricultural worker. Thereby one also understands the place to be a village, as the mind's eye pictures the fields beyond the borders of the painting. The consequent casting of village inhabitants as 'peasants' also brings with it other implications. In a more abstract sense 'village' can define the relationships of a certain group of people. Bunce's description of the essence of the village continues as, 'a settlement of cultivators which cannot farm successfully independently of each other.'¹⁵ This idea can also be applied to coastal populations and fishing, where villagers were equally dependent on each other in sustaining their livelihood. In this, the emphasis is placed less on the village as a group of buildings and more on the group of people that live there and the formation of an organised and harmonious society.

André Theuriot, in his book *La vie rustique* of 1888, divided his chapter on 'le village' into periods of the human life span: 'L'Enfance', 'La fiançaille', 'La famille', 'La fête patronale', 'La mort'. The village therefore begins to emerge as a living community with its own social structure, its own way of life and its own traditions, shaped by the natural environment from which it has grown. The function of human figures with regard to the general context and setting in landscape paintings is therefore highly significant. In many cases, however, the distinction between animated landscapes – the *paysage animé* – and the genre scenes, where figures dominated the implied narrative, was increasingly blurred. Whereas the purpose of this thesis is primarily to consider landscapes, where there is ambiguity discussion will focus on the generic qualities of the figures and their contribution to the landscape as a whole. A complete analysis of the village landscape can only be achieved where buildings, people and countryside are considered as one integral unit. Even where the people and the rural

¹⁵ BUNCE, 1982, p.31

surroundings were not visible, their presence was still implicit due to the well-established connotations associated with the motif.

Particularly in artistic imagery, the values represented by the village were all the more clear in that they were generally perceived at a distance from the reality of the specific place and subject portrayed. It is important to bear in mind that the majority of paintings to be considered in this thesis were produced amid the context of the Parisian art world. Both artists and their audiences represented a section of French society that was essentially bourgeois and urban. As such, their relationship with their national countryside would mostly have been that of the visitor or holiday-maker, or perhaps one of the many who had left the countryside to find success and prosperity in the city. It is therefore essential to consider the motif from this necessarily selective and partial perspective.

A number of important issues arise: first in respect of the factors that may have influenced the artists painting the imagery. The character and status of the prospective patron, audience and place where the work was to be hung, would certainly have affected the artist's choice of subject and the way he painted it. Where he situated himself and his work within the political structure of the art world would also have had an impact on the nature and style of his paintings. Particularly during the period of 1870-1890 the Paris art world and the artistic ideologies emanating from it were changing considerably. These two decades witnessed the fall of State authority over art and the consequent liberalisation and eventual division of the Paris Salon exhibitions. The dominant reign of the École de 1830 over landscape painting also dissipated, leaving an opening for the experiments of a younger generation. The growing popularity of painting *en plein air* guaranteed the elevated status of the landscape genre, and the increasing number of private dealerships assured a market for them. Yet in participating in the Paris art world, artists were not immune to external issues; they were implicitly responding to contemporary tastes and attitudes. In doing so their imagery was

intrinsically shaped by the concerns, ideals and preconceptions, of the broader social environment.

Secondly, therefore, the development of the village motif, or the village landscape, provokes further questions regarding the reasons for its appeal and the ways in which it responded to and reflected the contemporary context. Having established the profusion of potential meanings and connotations that the village could have, the corresponding characteristics of the urban cultural environment reveal many contrasts. Indeed, it is the distinction between the city and the village which is arguably the most immediate feature of the village landscape. In view of the motif's popularity, the relative lack of demand for paintings of the artist and audience's own urban environment becomes a major issue. Amid the modernisation, industrialisation and urban growth of the cities, it was the traditional simplicity of the rustic village which was evidently perceived as more attractive. Concerns over cultural change, rural depopulation and agricultural recession further affected the urban perspective, increasingly tinged by a sense of nostalgia. The prominent role of the village church and the apparent devotion of the peasant inhabitants also formed a moral contradiction against what many perceived as the decadence and corruption of the secular city. The consequent politicisation of the village was therefore another important factor in respect of the highly emotive debates over the Republic's secularisation laws. Within France's international context too, the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War in 1870-71 and the civil disruption of the Commune that followed, there was a pervading sense of discontent. The peasant's rural existence would have represented a lifestyle that to the viewer was inherently distinct from the upheaval of his own urban reality. The general idea of the rural escape was common, particularly as the advent of the railway network made it a practical possibility. The village could also respond to more nationalist sentiments, however; a symbol of a unified and harmonious community entrenched in its national soil.

The aim of this thesis will therefore be to analyse the relationship between these landscape paintings and the society that created them. It will examine the ways in which villages were perceived and portrayed as a response to the demands of the Paris art world and the social environment of Third Republic France as a whole. By distinguishing the common aspects of the motif, it will establish the different presumptions and stereotypes implicit in images of rural communities. And in view of the different levels and perspectives from which the motif could be understood, it will consider the ideas and values that paintings of villages addressed and promoted. The main themes to emerge, for example, include the changing relationship between urban society and rural France, attitudes toward modernisation and rural decline, as well as the State's nationalist policies of secularisation and centralisation. In all, the thesis will demonstrate the village motif as a symptomatic product of its artistic and social milieu, and a focal point for the concerns and aspirations of the nation.

Methodology

In achieving these aims I will provide a new perspective on existing debates in art history and reveal new information and arguments regarding artists and paintings previously lacking in research. Before embarking on the main body of analysis, however, this section will explain the approach that the thesis will take and the materials and research methods that have been used in its preparation.

Many of the existing texts regarding late-nineteenth-century French landscape paintings place an emphasis on the modernity of the *avant garde* – the ‘painters of modern life’. There is a perpetual fascination with representations of the changing city and bourgeois society. As such they are mostly concerned with the more controversial artists that were pushing the boundaries of artistic convention through technique or subject matter, or both. What emerges

in considering paintings of villages however, are the contrasting anti-modern attitudes within French art that made the *avant garde* minority conspicuous. As an institutional component of the rural landscape, it formed a familiar and unchanging framework through which a whole spectrum of artists chose to demonstrate their individual aims and ideas. Even among the most progressive artists who painted the village, the essential significance of the motif was very much founded on the inherent allusion to the long-established community. Instead of representing modern society itself, it conveyed a specific form of civilised existence which was particularly revealing of the contemporary nostalgia for a traditional way of life. My argument will therefore be based on the retrospective aspects of urban taste and the Paris art market during this period. Considering the village as a model for urban and national social values, I will highlight the rejection of modern reality in favour of the nostalgic idealisation of rural life.

In this respect, the thesis will expand on an existing body of discussion regarding a far more general analysis of French rural imagery during the nineteenth century. Robert Herbert is perhaps one of the earliest and most prominent authors to have developed this subject. The first three essays selected for his book *From Millet to Léger: Essays in social art history*, for instance, establish strong arguments regarding the iconisation of rural life and primitivism in response to urban industrialisation and modernisation.¹⁶ “City vs. Country” cited above, illustrates his main premise that ‘the peasant was among the most important subjects for the embodiment of artists’ attitudes toward the urban-industrial revolution.’¹⁷ Equally in respect of landscape painting, he demonstrates the reluctance of many artists to depict the industrialised and changing countryside. For Herbert, and other art historians such as Nicholas Green in *The Spectacle of Nature*, it is the paintings of the École de 1830 that are

¹⁶ Herbert, R., “Industry in the Changing Landscape from Daubigny to Monet”; “City vs. Country: The Rural Image in French Painting from Millet to Gauguin”; and “Peasants and Primitivism” in HERBERT, 2002, pp.1-21, 23-48 and 49-65 respectively

¹⁷ HERBERT, 2002, p.24

shown to be the prime example.¹⁸ Much of the literature concerning landscape painting from the 1870s and 1880s, however, focuses on the modernity of the Impressionists' subjects. In this respect the 'rural/urban' debate usually centres on the ambiguity of the *banlieue* and the encroachment of modern society into the natural countryside. Herbert, for instance, in his texts on Impressionism discusses the transformation of suburban villages such as Asnières and the effects of tourism and travel.¹⁹ The exhibition *A Day in the Country: Impressionism and the French Landscape* added to this approach. While the painting of modernity and the suburbs were still major themes, Richard Brettell broached the point that Impressionists such as Pissarro did also paint quite traditional-looking agricultural landscapes. He even used the terminology 'village landscape'.²⁰ Nonetheless, the topic has not been expanded on since; and as with a number of texts on Impressionism, he gives little idea of the wider extent of such imagery among other contemporary artists.

Landscapes of France: Impressionism and its Rivals formed a useful contrast in this respect. John House burst the artificial bubble that Impressionism appears to have acquired and re-centred his 'all-inclusive' perspective of French landscape painting on the pre-eminence of the Paris Salon. The works included in this exhibition make it clearly visible that the 'rural/urban' question was not simply about the École de 1830 and the Impressionists. They demonstrate that during the 1870s and 1880s a large number of paintings were produced by a wide variety of artists, of places all over France, many of them rural. The historian James McMillan's accompanying essay highlights a concept usually neglected regarding the landscapes of this period. Rather than changing modernity, he considers the portrayal of a timeless and traditional France – the notion of *la France profonde*. It is towards this type of iconography – the unquestionably rural and definitively French – that this thesis will be

¹⁸ See HERBERT, 1962, *passim*, and 2002, pp.1-65; and GREEN, 1990

¹⁹ e.g. See HERBERT, 1994, *passim*, and 1988, pp.195-302

²⁰ See Brettell, R., "Pissarro, Cézanne, and the School of Pontoise" and "The Fields of France" in BRETTELL & SCHAEFER, 1984, pp.175-206 and 241-272

oriented. Such notions of nationalism in French landscape painting are particularly important, for example, in demonstrating the significance of the unchanging village community in representing the nation's continuity with the past.

Concentrating on the ways that the French considered their own nation, the thesis will focus on French artists. Occasional references to foreign artists may be used to illustrate a contrast. Within this remit, however, I hope to present a broad cross-section of landscape artists from this period in order to demonstrate the pervasion of a common motif, over and above stylistic differences. Restrictions on the scope of the works to be considered were mostly due to the practicalities of research and the availability of sources. With regard to the locations represented, for example, most of the paintings will reflect the regions surrounding the museums and villages I was able to visit. While there are undoubtedly many works still to be found in other areas, therefore, the thesis will focus mainly on paintings of the northern half and east of France. The lack of paintings by female artists was not out of choice but is more a reflection of the perceived improprieties regarding where women could and could not go, and what they should and should not paint. Clearly village landscapes were considered a predominantly masculine domaine. Because the works submitted to the Paris Salons represented the most popular, familiar and mainstream art of the period, they will form the basis for the general arguments conveyed in each chapter. I have carried out extensive research in the stores and archives of regional galleries in France which has revealed a number of little-known paintings by artists renowned in their day but now barely recognised. The illustrated Salon catalogues, published from 1879 onwards, have also been extremely useful in finding visual evidence of Salon imagery. The works of those artists who reacted against Salon convention will be situated in relation to these more readily accepted landscapes. All will be considered as having an integrated role in the evolution of French landscape painting and in the machinations of the Paris art world. The distinctions that existed between different stylistic schools of thought did not necessarily translate to their

choice and treatment of their subject matter. A case study corresponding to each chapter will therefore examine specific artists to demonstrate the general points in more depth, but also to analyse the reasons behind their approach from a more individual level. Monographs, *catalogues raisonnés* and the artists' own correspondence have formed major sources in these studies in helping to reconstruct the ideas and influences affecting their work. Furthermore, site research and investigation into the local history of the villages in question have also contributed significantly to the visual analysis of the paintings. In obtaining an idea of what each village was like when it was painted, the selectivity of the artist and his manipulation of the subject, become more evident.

The iconographical analysis of landscape paintings, in comparison to other genres, can be problematic in this respect. Figure paintings and still lifes both require some form of deliberate composition, so conclusions can be drawn with a degree of certainty as to the specific interpretive intentions of the artist. Whereas the approach of most landscape painters during this period was to select and observe views that already existed in reality, it is more difficult to distinguish their express intentions from what might have been the coincidence of the location. Equally, if considering ingrained attitudes and stereotypes, the artist's choice and treatment of his subject matter may well have been subconscious rather than directly intentional. It is perhaps for this reason that the number of iconographical studies into landscape painting is rather limited. Most take the loose theme of a season, or perhaps a geographical area, rather than the constituent parts of the subject. The numerous texts on Breton imagery used in this thesis are an example. Clare Willsdon's *In the Gardens of Impressionism*, shows that more focussed iconographic texts can be highly successful, however.²¹ Other texts such as Richard Thomson's *Monet to Matisse: Landscape painting in France 1874-1914* also demonstrate the benefits of such an approach in considering paintings on a single or related theme by a variety of artists of different stylistic

²¹ WILLSDON, 2004

allegiances.²² In considering the similarities in subject matter before style, one finds the emergence of common values and preconceptions that relate to issues beyond the artistic. Particularly where commonalities appear across a wide selection of different artists, the iconography gains strength as a reflection of the general concerns and ideals of their contextual environment. Hence the prevalence of the village motif is an important indicator of the social and political climate as well as the evolving tastes in landscape painting. Modern texts on social, geographical and economic history have therefore been vital in identifying the influences that may have affected artists' perceptions and portrayal of rural communities during this period. In turn, the ideas and responses expressed in the contemporary art criticism and literature have also been essential in corroborating the conclusions of my visual analysis.

Exploring the reasons for the popularity of the village motif, and the different meanings and connotations it represented, the main body of the thesis will adopt a thematic approach. To begin, however, chapter two will introduce the range and complexity of factors that influenced the production and reception of such works amid the social environment of Third Republic Paris. Split into three sections, the first considers briefly the relevance of modern aesthetic theory in explaining the ways in which viewers or artists might have related to village imagery. The aesthetician Jay Appleton's 'prospect-refuge' theory and the cultural geographer Denis Cosgrove's notion of the active 'participant' and the passive 'observer' are the most constructive in this sense.²³ By comparing these two approaches, and applying them to the interpretation of paintings, I aim to demonstrate the inseparability of contextual influence from the creation and appreciation of landscape imagery. The second section will then illustrate this connection with regard to the evolution of rural stereotypes and the changing political and cultural relationship between the urban bourgeoisie and the peasantry.

²² THOMSON, R., 1994

²³ See APPLETON, 1990 and 1996; COSGROVE, 1984; and COSGROVE & DANIELS, 1988

It will map the type of imagery that emerged through the after-effects of the Franco-Prussian War, industrialisation and the threat of rural decline. Many of the observations arise from the examination of primary sources such as paintings and Salon reviews; however, contemporary literature also presents comparable perspectives. Although I will deal predominantly with visual imagery, some literary texts contributed greatly to the development of urban perceptions or rural life; for example, preceding works by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Honoré de Balzac and George Sand, as well as contemporary novels by Émile Zola. James Lehning's *Peasant and French: Cultural Contact in Rural France during the Nineteenth Century* provides a 'rural/urban' analysis of literature throughout the nineteenth century.²⁴ Historical texts such as Eugen Weber's formative *Peasants into Frenchmen* and Roger Tombs's *France 1814-1914* also provide a useful historical background against which to set the nuances of the cultural divide.²⁵ The last of these sections then examines the highly politicised nature of the Paris art world and the evolution of landscape and the village motif within it. Considering initially the regime of MacMahon that ended in 1879, and then the Opportunist Republic, it examines the effects of State authority over landscape painting, and its eventual demise. It also evaluates the status of the different exhibiting forums, namely the Paris Salon, the independent exhibition and the private dealerships. Again, the works themselves and the contemporary criticism are invaluable in presenting the different opinions regarding the role of landscape painting and the form it should take. Texts by Pierre Vaisse, Daniel Sherman, Jane Mayo Roos and John House give good insight into State involvement in the art world.²⁶ Patricia Mainardi's detailed account of the relinquishing of State authority in *The End of the Salon: Art and State*

²⁴ LEHNING, 1995

²⁵ WEBER, 1976; and TOMBS, 1996

²⁶ See VAISSE, 1995; SHERMAN, 1989; Roos, J.M., "Herbivores versus Herbiphobes: Landscape painting and the State" in HOUSE, 1995, pp.40-51; ROOS, 1996; House, J., "Authority Versus Independence: The position of French landscape in the 1870s" in THOMSON, R., 1998, pp.15-34; and HOUSE, 2004

in the *Early Third Republic* is particularly informative.²⁷ Commentary on the growth of the private market is more limited; however, articles by Martha Ward and Monique Nonne present very thorough analyses.²⁸

The following case study examines the personal, artistic and market influences shaping the village landscapes of Monet at Vétheuil and Henri Harpignies at Saint-Privé. Although their stylistic values were completely opposed I will argue that the similarities in their contextual environment also led to similarities in their depiction of the village motif. Recent art historical texts regarding Monet's paintings during his time at Vétheuil are profuse. Exhibition catalogues for *Monet: The Seine and the Sea* and *Monet at Vétheuil: The Turning Point*, provide the most in depth analysis of the paintings and Monet's life during this time.²⁹ Monographs of the artist by John House, Virginia Spate and Daniel Wildenstein are also constructive.³⁰ None really address his depiction of the village specifically, however, or consider his use of iconography with respect to his commercialisation of his art. In this respect Wildenstein's catalogue raisonné of Monet's works and correspondence has been indispensable in forming a new perspective on these paintings.³¹ Recent texts regarding Harpignies are in contrast sparse. Agnes Mongan's detailed biographical article is enlightening but offers only summary visual analysis and little information regarding his paintings of Saint-Privé.³² No catalogue raisonné exists of the artist's work to date; however, one is currently being compiled by Robert Hellebranth. Although it has been more difficult to fully contextualise Harpignies's village paintings within his complete oeuvre, the Witt Library and the art dealers Stoppenbach & Delestre have provided a copious amount of reproductions of the artist's works, some of which were traced to museums. Émile Miquel's

²⁷ MAINARDI, 1993

²⁸ WARD, 1991; and NONNE, 2000

²⁹ CLARKE & THOMSON, 2005; and DIXON et al, 1998

³⁰ HOUSE, 1986; SPATE, 2001; and WILDENSTEIN, 1996, I

³¹ WILDENSTEIN, 1979

³² Mongan, A., "Henri-Joseph Harpignies", in WILMERDING, 1986, pp.227-237

volumes on *Le paysage Français au XIXème: l'école de la nature 1824-1874* also provided an in-depth chronology of Harpignies's life including lists of his sales and exhibitions, as well as excerpts from contemporary reviews and the artist's own journal.³³ Due to his considerable prominence in the world of landscape painting during his own lifetime, the spate of obituaries after his death in 1916, provide much information. His name also appears frequently in Salon reviews of the period. With regard to Monet's work, the main body of contemporary criticism during the few years he painted at Vétheuil arises from the Impressionist exhibitions and his one-man show at the offices of the journal *La Vie Moderne*. Ruth Berson's documentation of Impressionist exhibition criticism provides a wealth of material.³⁴ Charles Stuckey's translation of other articles concerning Monet, in *Monet, a Retrospective*, contains some other important texts.³⁵ Aspects of local history regarding each village have also contributed to my arguments. The schoolmasters' reports, in Vétheuil for the Exposition Universelle of 1900, and in Saint-Privé for that of 1889, offered particularly thorough accounts and statistics. In the latter case these were reproduced in Jean-Pierre Rocher's *Les paysans de l'Yonne au XIXème siècle – du lendemain de la révolution à la grande guerre*.³⁶

Embarking on a more direct and thematic analysis of the village motif, chapter three discusses the role of location in landscape paintings and how artists conveyed the identity of the places they were depicting. The chapter begins by tracking the changing function of location in landscape painting over the course of the nineteenth century, demonstrating a trend towards specificity and nationalism in the paintings of the Third Republic. There are few texts to this effect; therefore visual analysis, contemporary criticism and reference to general studies of nineteenth-century French landscape painting, have been the main sources

³³ MIQUEL, 1975, III

³⁴ BERSON, 1996

³⁵ STUCKEY, 1988

³⁶ BURTON, 1900; and ROCHER, 1978

in this section.³⁷ Dominique Lobstein's statistics compiled for his essay regarding paintings of Normandy in the Salons between 1801 and 1865, however, reveal some interesting trends.³⁸ In view of the nationalist sentiments circulating during the 1870s and 1880s the next section expounds the tension that existed between the obscure individuality of the rural community and its function as part of the unified French nation. The church, in particular, will be identified as integral to the specific character and traditions of each village, posing a potential threat to the Republic's idealised vision of *la patrie*. Gabriel LeBras's *L'Église du village* and Alain Corbin's *Village Bells* both support the general idea of the church being at the centre of community identity.³⁹ The many texts regarding the politicisation of village churches, in response to the secularisation laws of the 1880s, also lend weight to the significance of the church within the village motif.⁴⁰ Contemporary sources such as G. Bruno's famous school book *Le tour de la France par deux enfants* and Ernest Renan's discourse *Qu'est qu'une nation?* give an idea of the Republican image of the nation, without religion.⁴¹ Although the conflict between Church and State has received much historical analysis, few have addressed the issue with regard to the art of the period. Michael Driskel's *Representing Belief: Religion, Art and Society in Nineteenth-Century France* considers the issue in respect of expressly religious iconography, but not in the context of everyday scenes of contemporary French life.⁴² The following section ends the discussion by examining the effect of tourism on the types of location depicted and the ways in which they were portrayed. Roger Price's *The Modernisation of Rural France: Communications Networks and Agricultural Market Structures in Nineteenth-Century France* and Sanford Elwitt's *The Making of the Third Republic: Class and Politics in France, 1868-1884* make clear the

³⁷ e.g. HOUSE, 1995; and re the École de 1830, GREEN, 1990

³⁸ Lobstein, D., "Les peintres du Salon à la conquête de la Normandie" in FOWLE, 2006, publication pending

³⁹ LeBRAS, 1976; and CORBIN, 1998

⁴⁰ See CHOLVY & HILAIRE, 1991; McMillan, J., "'Priest hits girl': on the front line in the 'war of the two Frances'", in CLARK & KAISER, 2003, pp. 77-101; SINGER, 1983; ZELDIN, 1970

⁴¹ BRUNO, 1925; and RENAN, 1997

⁴² DRISKEL, 1992

extent of expansion in the French communications network that led to the boom in provincial tourism.⁴³ The study of tourism in art historical terms has focused mainly on tourists as subject matter, or artists as tourists themselves. Herbert's *Monet on the Normandy Coast: Tourism and Painting* is one example, whereas Nina Lübbren and Michael Jacobs have both written comprehensive studies on the subject of artist colonies. My aim, however, is to draw attention to the interdependent link between landscape art, tourism and consequent perceptions of villages.⁴⁴

Expanding on this topic, the corresponding case study on paintings of Brittany examines the development of a regional iconography and the characteristics of the Breton village motif. Both British and French nineteenth-century tourist guidebooks have been particularly useful in articulating the attraction of the region for the bourgeois visitor; Henry Blackburn and the artist Randolph Caldecott's *Breton Folk: An Artistic Tour in Brittany* is perhaps the best known.⁴⁵ The study will consider, in particular, the role of the highly popular artist colony Pont-Aven in the formation of the motif. The evidence from local historical sources and site research makes it evident that there was a significant divergence between the reality of the thriving tourist resort and the pious primitivism and rusticity evoked by the artists who painted there.⁴⁶ In identifying the ways in which artists manipulated the imagery, therefore, I will highlight the aspects of the Breton community that were most idealised in the iconography. Paul Gauguin's paintings were particularly vivid and exemplify the potency of the simplified motif. Texts by André Cariou and Denise Delouche form the foundation of study into the Breton imagery of this period.⁴⁷ The latter has also contributed to the main volume of writing on Gauguin in Brittany, alongside Belinda Thomson, Ronald Pickvance

⁴³ PRICE, 1983; and ELWITT, 1975

⁴⁴ LÜBBREN, 2001; and JACOBS, 1985

⁴⁵ BLACKBURN & CALDECOTT, 1880. See also BERTALL, 1886; FORBES, 1886; GEFFROY, 1897; HUTCHINSON, 1876; MacQUOID, 1877 and 1879; PALLISER, 1869; De QUETTEVILLE, 1870; VATTIER D'AMBROYSE, 1892; and VERNON, 1884

⁴⁶ See Le CORRE, 1960 ; and THERSIQUEL et al, 1986

⁴⁷ See CARIOU, 1999; YONNET & CARIOU, 1999; and DELOUCHE, 1978

and Wladyslawa Jaworska.⁴⁸ Among the large body of writing on the artist, other texts by authors such as John House and MaryAnne Stevens, John Rewald, Claire Frèches-Thory, as well as Robert Herbert, also offer useful perspectives on his Breton works.⁴⁹ Daniel Wildenstein's *catalogue raisonné* and the correspondence compiled by Maurice Malingue and Victor Merlhès have been essential as sources of primary material.⁵⁰ Whereas the artist is generally recognised within the 'rural/urban' debate as a searcher of the primitive, the specific significance of his Pont-Aven works as village landscapes has not been considered. I aim to use his portrayal of the village to demonstrate his own characteristics as an essentially Parisian artist, and to illustrate an idealised sense of community based on the divergence between the village and modern urban reality.

The fourth chapter develops the notion of the village as a cohesive working community. Situating the large number of paintings depicting active and prosperous agricultural villages amid the contextual realities of Third Republic rural decline and modernisation, it establishes the inherent idealism of such imagery. Jean Pitié's annotated bibliography *L'Homme et son espace: l'exode rural en France du XVI^e siècle à nos jours* provides a number of useful references and excerpts from contemporary commentary on the subject.⁵¹ These articles and discourses, added to the criticism responding to the artistic imagery, express a number of both religious and nationalist ideals. Again the texts regarding the role of the village church, and the status of Christianity at this time, are highly relevant in establishing the concept of the pious peasants working together with God and nature. Equally, in viewing the paintings from a Republican perspective, the murals painted during this period in the Parisian *mairies* reveal the agricultural village as a strong component of the State's ideological iconography.

⁴⁸ See DELOUCHE, 1996; THOMSON, B., 1987, 1993 and 2005; PICKVANCE, 1994; and JAWORSKA, 1972

⁴⁹ HOUSE & STEVENS, 1979; REWALD, 1978; Frèches-Thory, C., "Brittany, 1886-1890" in BRETTELL et al, 1988, pp.52-57; and Herbert, R., "City vs. Country: The Rural Image in French Painting from Millet to Gauguin" in HERBERT, 2002, pp.23-48

⁵⁰ WILDENSTEIN, 2002; MALINGUE, 1946; and MERLHÈS, 1984

⁵¹ PITIÉ, 1987

Thérèse Burollet's text for the exhibition *Le triomphe des mairies: grand décors républicains à Paris, 1870-1914* gives an incisive analysis of the values of the Third Republic.⁵² The sense of nostalgia regarding the ideal working village is also strong, however; as is evident in the paintings and in the contemporary literature. André Theuriot's *La vie rustique* is a prime example.⁵³ Historical and economic commentary on nineteenth-century farming by authors such as Eugen Weber, Raymond Jonas, Jonathan Liebowitz and Colin Heywood, make clear the failure of artists to recognise the modern status of the agricultural community. Naturalist works by painters such as Jules Bastien-Lepage demonstrate the conflict that they faced in attempting to portray both 'true' and poetic images amid what was seen as an unattractive and changing modernity. Even the 'modern' paintings of Camille Pissarro present a rather traditional notion of the working village. Both Richard Brettell and Clare Willson provide detailed analysis of these works.⁵⁴

Alfred Sisley's numerous paintings of the village Saint-Mammès are, in contrast, used as a case study to demonstrate the depiction of a modern working village. These village landscapes are considered in their context as depicting a thriving barge community benefiting from State investment in the French transport network. I will argue that they depict Sisley's own idealisation of the active community as part of contemporary Republican France. The main art historical texts regarding Sisley's paintings consist of monographic overviews of works mostly from public collections. These have been written and compiled by Richard Shone, MaryAnne Stevens and Ann Dumas.⁵⁵ While instructive, none consider the full extent of his paintings at Saint-Mammès. François Daulte's *catalogue raisonné* of Sisley's paintings, however, reveals that the artist made an intensive study of the village and

⁵² Burollet, T., "Prolégomènes à l'étude du mur républicain", in GENTIL, 1986, pp.22-42

⁵³ THEURIOT, 1888

⁵⁴ Brettell, R., "Pissarro, Cézanne, and the School of Pontoise" and "The Fields of France" in BRETTELL & SCHAEFER, 1984, pp.175-182 and 241-247; and WILLSDON, 2004, pp.189-201

⁵⁵ SHONE, 1992; STEVENS, 1992; STEVENS & DUMAS, 2002

its community.⁵⁶ Many of these works are now in private collections and for the purposes of the thesis have been reproduced from sales catalogues in the Witt Library. Nor do these writers recognise the possibility of any political inferences. Relating the images to both national and local history has therefore been essential in this respect. The texts of the schoolmaster of Saint-Mammès and the schoolmistress of nearby Moret for the Exposition Universelle of 1889 have both proved useful sources.⁵⁷ Other contemporary accounts of the locality include a tourist guide for Moret published in 1901, a history of the town written by l'Abbé Pougeois in 1874, and a history of Saint-Mammès by l'Abbé Clément from 1900.⁵⁸ Jean-Michel Regnault's history of neighbouring Veneux-Nadon, and Vanessa Manceron's examination of barge life in the area, are more recent but highly informative.⁵⁹ These and extensive site research have demonstrated the selectivity of Sisley's approach as well as the distinctly optimistic and modern nature of his perspective.

The last of the main topics to be discussed is the converse and complement to the active working village – scenes of villages at rest. It will view the village as a practical refuge for the village inhabitant, but also as a psychological sanctuary for the urban viewer from the turmoil of city life. Although the peace and tranquillity of an inactive village could have positive connotations, however, they could also evoke a strong sense of melancholy, particularly in respect of the concerns over rural decline. The texts regarding the effects of the agricultural recession and rural migration are once more an important source. Leslie Moch's *Paths to the City: Regional Migration in Nineteenth-Century France*, and Jacques Dupâquier et al's compilation of statistics and population studies, add to those references already cited above.⁶⁰ Charles Mourre's article from 1900, "L'Affaiblissement de la natalité en France", presents a contemporary view on the other contentious issue of falling birth

⁵⁶ DAULTE, 1959

⁵⁷ RAUSOIR, 1888; and COLLIN, 1889

⁵⁸ FÉJARD, 1901; POUGEOIS, 1889; and CLÉMENT, 1985

⁵⁹ REGNAULT, 1991; and MANCERON, 1994

⁶⁰ MOCH, 1983; and DUPÂQUIER et al, 1988

rates, which was also connected to rural depopulation and the fall of French traditional values.⁶¹ The emotive nuances that resulted in rural landscape paintings are clearly evident in the art criticism of the period and were often evoked by the time, season and mood expressed in the imagery. In examining a number of relevant works I will demonstrate the role of atmospheric effects and the simplification of the motif, in appealing to the sensibilities and nostalgia of the audience.

The final case study examines the numerous paintings of villages in twilight by the artist Jean-Charles Cazin. Although many of his works have been lost or destroyed, some examples of his village paintings do remain in galleries in France and America, others are reproduced in journals from the turn of the twentieth century and more recent sales catalogues. Similarly to Harpignies, he was highly renowned and respected during his lifetime, but now has little recognition. Recent art historical writing on the artist is mainly limited to that of Gabriel Weisberg regarding the reception of his art in America, but also in the context of his exhibition *The Realist Tradition: French Painting and Drawing, 1830-1900*.⁶² There were, however, in addition to Salon reviews and other commentary, a large number of obituaries published after his death in 1901, by writers such as Henri Frantz in Britain; and in France Raymond Bouyer, Paul Desjardins, Arsène Alexandre and François Thiébault-Sisson; with the most extensive and perhaps most prominent biographies by Léonce Bénédict.⁶³ Painting from memory and relying on the evocative nature of half-light, the amount of express detail in Cazin's paintings was highly limited. This is contrasted, however, by the rich and varied interpretations of the contemporary criticism. Considering the simplified and suggestive qualities of Cazin's imagery and the creativity of the viewers'

⁶¹ MOURRE, 1900

⁶² WEISBERG, 1980, 1995 and 1999

⁶³ FRANTZ, 1911; BOUYER, 1901; DESJARDINS, 1901; ALEXANDRE, 1901; THIÉBAULT-SISSON, 1902; and BÉNÉDITE, 1897, 1901 and 1902

imaginings, his paintings are a fitting example of the depth of meaning that the village motif could hold.

To end, the concluding chapter will reappraise the aims set out in this introduction and attempt to demonstrate how they have been achieved. Certainly, while the appearance of the village and its connotations were innately recognisable, the roles it could fulfil, the tastes it could appeal to and the sentiments it could evoke were complex and diverse. From the inconsequential village in its local environment, to the placing of society within its national soil, the motif could elicit a variety of meanings and connotations to appeal to a number of different perspectives. The resonance of village imagery amid its contemporary context was not due to the direct observation of reality, however. Rather, it was in the articulation of specific ideals and preconceptions relevant to the artists and their mainly urban audience at that time. Presenting a set of contrasts between the rustic community and the urban environment, the changes of industrialisation and the traditions of the countryside, the thesis will demonstrate the reflection of modern values in the notion of a continuing rural past.

Chapter Two

Paris and the Village

It is clear that the village motif held widespread appeal among artists and their audiences during this period. The number of landscape paintings from between 1870 and 1890 that included or depicted rural communities was considerable. Furthermore, the variety of painters and stylistic schools that exploited it was extensive. The purpose of this chapter therefore, will be to consider the different elements which may have affected or influenced the consumers and creators of such imagery. These fall broadly under three different categories. The aesthetic value of the motif, for example, would have been an important aspect of its attraction, as with all art. Consequently, the first section will consider the relevance of aesthetic theory to the interpretation of village landscapes and attempt to explain and isolate the motif's instinctive and emotive significance. It is also essential, however, to situate the imagery within its contemporary context. The general mood of the nation was bound to emerge in the artistic imagery that it created, especially during as unsettled a period as the early Third Republic. The second section will therefore explore and establish the social and political climate in which these paintings were being produced. Lastly, the various facets of the Paris art world had perhaps the most immediate impact on the type of imagery used by artists and the way in which they depicted it. Components such as official authorities, exhibiting forums, market forces, as well as the precedents of previous artists, will all be considered in examining the evolving trends in French landscape painting. To finish, a case study will compare the factors which contributed to the use of the village by two specific artists – Claude Monet and Henri Harpignies. Strongly contrasting in their personal circumstances and artistic beliefs, their similarities in their works demonstrate the pervasive resonance of the village motif.

The aesthetic appeal of the rural village

Many of the works which the thesis will analyse could be characterised simply as charming rustic scenes. As is often the case with such apparently serene landscape paintings when the interpretive analysis of the imagery becomes rather laboured, the question may be raised: ‘But could the artist not have just chosen to paint the scene because he found it beautiful or moving?’ A similar argument can also be made with regard to the reasons for viewers’ enjoyment of such art. Both assertions would be justified. It is certain that landscape paintings can appear attractive or emotive independent from any express contemporary contextual correlation; in other words can be viewed from a purely aesthetic standpoint. Whether such attraction is independent of mental association generally is however debatable, particularly when considered at the subconscious level. The modern theorist Jay Appleton’s thorough analyses of the aesthetics of landscape ask, for example, ‘What is it that we like about landscape, and why do we like it?’.¹ Discussing observers’ reactions in terms of the associations made by human instinct, he argues that the appeal of a landscape springs from genetically instilled preferences linked to the ‘ability of a place to satisfy *all* our biological needs.’² In his text *The Experience of Landscape*, he identifies the most basic of these survival instincts as being the ability to ‘see without being seen’. Labelling it his ‘prospect-refuge theory’, he explains that the essential components of an aesthetic landscape consist of a place of shelter to hide and the ability to see.³ Considered in terms of paintings of villages such ideals would seem highly pertinent. This section will therefore examine the validity of Appleton’s theories and the extent to which they might explain the attraction of the village motif.

¹ APPLETON, 1996, p.1

² APPLETON, 1996, p.63; and APPLETON, 1990, p.15

³ APPLETON, 1996, p.66

Following Appleton's explanation, the motif of the village might be understood as both a 'prospect' and a 'refuge'. One of the 'prospect symbols' he identifies, for instance, is the prominent form that attracts the eye by rising above the surrounding terrain.⁴ This notion is applicable to many village landscape paintings, particularly where a protruding church spire is the dominant feature. The effect is accentuated even more if placed on top of a hill, as in Léon Herpin's painting from the Salon of 1877, *Environs de Cherbourg* (fig.9). Edmond Duranty's review of this painting describes the aesthetic appeal of the landscape in terms which certainly tend toward the effect of a 'prospect' rather than a 'refuge':

Le plus pittoresque, le plus beau motif du Salon a été choisi ou *surpris* par M. Herpin ; peut-être est-il trop riche même, dans sa série de gradins composés de rochers que surmonte un village, de larges terrains herbeux et de pentes s'enfonçant, couvertes de grands bois, jusqu'à la mer qui brille par-dessus les arbres. ... M. Herpin n'aime pas le paysage *étouffé*, il l'aime vaste, il aime les rendez-vous de collines, d'accidents et d'incidents, l'animation, la variété, une *vie active* de la nature.⁵

However, the idea of buildings as purpose-built places of human 'refuge' is inescapable in most cases. And in paintings, as with the concept of the 'prospect', the use of compositional devices often facilitates this interpretation.

Appleton describes how the 'refuge' can be emphasised by juxtaposing it with a 'prospect-dominant' or 'hazard-dominant' landscape.⁶ Many images of coastal villages, for example Antoine Guillemet's, *Villerville*, 1876 (fig.10), make such contrasts. In this painting the presence of the village, which is barely visible on the horizon, is made emphatically significant as a refuge from the hostility and vastness of the seascape and land around it. More removed from this more dramatic treatment of the motif, however, the sense of 'refuge' can be enhanced by what Appleton refers to as 'ease of penetration', or in other

⁴ APPLETON, 1990, pp.46-47

⁵ DURANTY, 1877, pp.573-574

⁶ APPLETON, 1996, pp.85 and 138

words a means of access.⁷ This effect is reproduced in works, such as Lionel Brioux's Salon painting from 1883, *Entrée du village de Saint-Cenery (Orne)* (fig.11). The image gives a particularly comforting sense of invitation with the road leading into the composition and the open doors and windows of the house in the foreground. Such devices appear in many paintings of villages and in terms of Appleton's 'refuge theory' would adopt similar functions.

While intuitive, however, Appleton's attempts to isolate a purely instinctive landscape aesthetic can also be rather limiting. His 'prospect-refuge theory' certainly establishes a highly convincing argument for the attraction behind certain landscape symbols, and is especially fitting in relation to paintings of villages. Nonetheless, in his efforts to define a general rather than contextual analysis, he focuses largely on the simplification of landscape symbolism rather than elaborating on it. He refers mostly to elements of structure and the role of the viewer is rendered as an eye, influenced only by the subliminal instinct for survival. The intellectual participation of the observer is not a factor that Appleton explores, but one which is fundamental in understanding the import of the village motif to its audience.

In any painting, not only visual but mental and rational engagement is a key aspect in drawing attention. A relationship is struck between the observer and the image, with both taking an active role. Referring again to Brioux's painting as an example – as well as the composition providing 'ease of penetration', the viewer is also invited to participate to some extent. Extrapolating the setting beyond the borders of the frame, the onlooker is situated on the road and the *repoussoir* perspective motions him to cross the bridge. But the appearance of figures following the same path also raises questions regarding his status within the scene, perhaps even more so than simply removing the viewer from his usual context. Should he,

⁷ APPLETON, 1996, p.94

for example, also assume the role of the villager going about his daily business? The analysis of Denis Cosgrove, a theorist in cultural geography, is possibly more constructive in this respect. Rather than distinguishing, somewhat artificially, the aesthetic appeal derived from primitive instincts as Appleton does, Cosgrove instead refers to the levels of separation of 'self from scene'. His analysis creates a spectrum between the individual observer and the social participant. He writes,

To speak of landscape beauty or quality is to adopt the role of observer rather than participant. The painter's use of landscape implies, precisely, observation by an individual, in critical respects removed from it. ... To apply the term *landscape* to their surroundings seems inappropriate to those who occupy and work in a place as insiders. ... *place* seems a more appropriate term.⁸

Whereas the participant considers the 'place' in terms of their involvement in daily life and events, the observer views the 'landscape' in terms of attractiveness or merit. With regard to the paintings of villages being examined in this thesis, the manipulation of such relationships is clearly evident.

The fact that a scene appears on canvas in itself sets the viewer at a distance, but by prompting him to identify with some aspect of the painting the artist could enhance the communicative effect of his imagery. A village landscape, for instance, may seem more vivid if the person looking at it is urged to imagine actually being there; and rather than simply observing, thinking about the workings of the community from the perspective of an insider. The reasons why the artistic audience may have wanted to imagine themselves in such a context will be considered in greater detail below; however, it is important first to consider the ways in which images could be used to create such effects. The use of pathways leading in, past or through a village, as well as the placement of figures, were common devices, as demonstrated by Brioux's painting. The bourgeois Parisians perusing the painting in the Salon would no doubt have been conscious of the social and physical distance between

⁸ COSGROVE, 1984, pp.18-19

them and the rural painting they were looking at. However, rather than confronting the viewer with peasant life Brioux breaks down such differences by suggesting an invitation into a peaceful and unprovocative village scene. A contrast might be *Les toits rouges*, 1877 (fig.12), by the less conventional artist Camille Pissarro, where the village appears inaccessible and set apart from the observer. There is no obvious visual pathway into the composition and the tangle of branches forms a barrier between the viewpoint and the houses. The blank walls and closed doors add to the sense of both physical and social separation.

It was not only pictorial devices which allowed or denied the viewer a way of identifying with the subject matter. The sentimental implications created by the personal perspective of the original viewer, the artist, had a significant bearing on how paintings were interpreted. If an artist painted his native village, for example, it authenticated his knowledge of the place, at once giving the view of the ‘insider’ and making the image’s meaning more profound. In response to a painting by the artist Charles Busson in the Salon of 1880, for example, the critic Émile Michel wrote,

M. Busson, lui aussi est resté presque toujours fidèle aux mêmes horizons, mais le Vendômois qu’il a peint est sa vraie patrie. À la façon dont il nous en parle, vous comprenez que ce pays lui tient au cœur et qu’il y a entre l’artiste et cette nature les mille liens que créent les longues affections et les souvenirs de toute une vie.⁹

Some artists, for example Impressionists such as Alfred Sisley and Claude Monet, painted the villages where they were living and had recently moved to. But it is clear that the emotive responses to their paintings were not the same. By painting places to which they had no long-term attachment, as well as professing to a *plein air* technique which captured the impression of the moment, the personally sentimental elements of their works were practically non-existent. With regard to Salon paintings, however, terms relating to

⁹ MICHEL, É., 1880, p.911

recognition, familiarity and memories often arose in critics' reviews.¹⁰ Sometimes such references were simply reminders of cherished pleasure-trips to the countryside. There was, nonetheless, an underlying current of nostalgia which permeated the reception of many rural landscape paintings.

Even if simply portrayed by the short-term visitor, villages' emotive significance often resounded as a generalised symbol of the most basic and fundamental of social entities. Returning to Appleton's theory of the 'refuge', the symbolism of the village is again particularly emphatic in that the grouping of buildings shows not only the strength of the refuge but also the ability to settle as a community. He compares the attraction of such imagery to the homing instinct of animals and the search for a 'nesting place': 'whatever is needed for the raising of a family'.¹¹ Examples of such ideals are clearly evident in paintings like Émile Isebart's *Avril en Franche-Comté*, 1886 (fig.13), where the different generations flourish among the new growth of spring and the form of the village provides security from the wild hillside beyond. This is just one example; the portrayal of the village surrounded by fertile fields is a common one, and scenes are often accompanied by figures representing both old and young, symbolising the continuity of the generations. Attitudes regarding what a desirable environment for raising a family is, apart from the basic need for refuge, depended very much on the contemporary values of society as well as instinct. It is particularly revealing that the ideal 'nesting place' for the late nineteenth century Parisians appears to have manifested itself in these cases in the motif of the peasant village, and not in the environment of the city in which they themselves lived. Reviewing the Salon of 1885 André Michel wrote,

¹⁰ e.g. See DURANTY, 1877

¹¹ APPLETON, 1990, pp.46-47

La vie moderne, dont on nous propose la représentation, est factice autant que troublante et c'est un fait remarquable que les meilleurs et les plus grands sont allés chercher dans la campagne, loin du boulevard et des brasseries, leurs inspirations les plus fécondes.¹²

Cosgrove describes landscape as, '... an ideological concept. It represents a way in which certain classes of people have signified themselves and their world through their imagined relationship with nature...'¹³ Certainly, it is easy to perceive the nineteenth century representation of the village motif as a manifestation of social ideals. As stated by Cosgrove, the relationship of man with nature appears to have been an important aspect of this. Appleton also recognises the importance of this relationship in general terms. He discusses the significance of the 'refuge' which he describes as, 'symbolic of man's assertion of his emancipation from subjugation by the powers of nature'.¹⁴ However, he also identifies a reluctance to be distanced from the 'natural sign-stimuli which activate our aesthetic responses ...' and refers to the 'naturalisation' of buildings, for example ivy-clad cottages with masonry in the local stone.¹⁵ This is perhaps a reason for the popularity of the rustic village motif. Indeed, the idea of going back to nature emerged in many reviews. Duranty stated, for example, 'Le bienfait du paysage familier a été de rapprocher la terre de nous, de nous unir à elle, de mettre en communion avec elle nos maisons, nos villages, nos vêtements, nos figures.'¹⁶ Combined with Cosgrove's understanding of the landscape as a 'social product', this symbol of emancipation from nature might also be perceived as a form of civilised society. In short, the relationship between man and the surrounding landscape can be interpreted as indicative of society's perception of itself and its ideals in general.¹⁷

¹² MICHEL, A., 1885, p.401

¹³ COSGROVE, 1984, p.15

¹⁴ APPLETON, 1996, p.92

¹⁵ APPLETON, 1996, p.153

¹⁶ DURANTY, 1877, p.572

¹⁷ COSGROVE, 1984, p.14

Appleton's theories are useful in that they help to identify some of the inherently attractive elements of the landscape paintings which this thesis is going to examine. Nonetheless, it is evident that the events and attitudes of the contemporary context were instrumental in dictating how these elements were portrayed and received. It is possible to conclude, for example, that a house might essentially be an appealing image, but the value of the motif could be altered. Charles-Joseph Beauverie's Salon painting from 1883, for example, looks peaceful and rustic in the black and white catalogue illustration (fig.14); however, the title, *Les mesures à Auvers (The Hovels at Auvers)* casts a derogatory outlook on the viewer's perspective. The way artists manipulated the motif to enhance or detract from the pleasurable effect was largely in response to the more subjective nuances of public perception. The next section of the chapter will therefore introduce some of the social and political factors which may have played a role in drawing artists and audiences toward the village motif.

The village landscape and its contemporary context

The relationship between the bourgeois 'ruling' classes in the cities and the French countryside had fluctuated significantly throughout the nineteenth century. In response, the visual and literary arts acted as a continuing barometer to the social and political climate, expressing the attitudes and tastes of those who produced and consumed them. Far from offering a balanced outlook on the rural condition, the result culminated in perspectives and stereotypes which were greatly biased toward the urban market. Paintings being sold and exhibited in Paris, for example, in many ways revealed more about the urban market than their immediate subject matter. The transition of countryside onto canvas was somewhat convoluted and it is therefore important to establish first the contemporary context in which these interpretations evolved. This section will introduce both negative and positive

elements of the provincial stereotypes and some of the social and political factors which would have contributed to their conception.

Above all it was the difference between ‘us’ and ‘them’, city and province, which permeated most portrayals of peasant life and rural landscape. Prior to the Third Republic, particularly before the railways became well-established, the provinces represented a foreign entity to much of the urban population. Their lifestyles, environments, dress and in some cases language, were largely divergent. For many in the early nineteenth century especially, the peasant conjured fears of savagery and even insurrection. These ideas were fuelled by reports of widespread illiteracy and a reputation for being uncivilised and backward. The rebellion of provincial groups such as the Breton *Chouans* during the French Revolution also provided an added sense of danger. Such characteristics were made to seem thrilling and intriguing when recounted in novels like Honoré de Balzac’s *Les Chouans* from 1827. Similar imagery appeared in paintings such as Évariste-Vital Luminais’s *Retour de chasse*, 1861 (fig.15), where two rugged Chouan-type figures lurk behind some bushes, stalking their next prey. The gallery label for this picture suggests that they would hunt Republican troops as readily as they would rabbits.¹⁸

Later, during the Third Republic, literature such as Émile Zola’s *La terre*, which was published in 1887 and set in the 1860s, perpetuated an element of general savagery in the rural stereotype.¹⁹ These more negative associations were also evident in some of the later landscape paintings, for instance Beauverie’s *Les mesures à Auvers* shows a distinctly derogatory portrayal of the village buildings. By the 1870s, the threat of peasant uprising had mostly abated, however. During the Franco-Prussian War in 1870-1871 another threat came from abroad and, in defeat, the nation mourned the loss of the province of Alsace and part of

¹⁸ Musée des Beaux-Arts, Quimper

¹⁹ ZOLA, 1971

Lorraine, when they were ceded to the enemy. Then, in the brief but bloody civil unrest of the Commune, which arose during the Spring of 1871 in protest against the peace treaty, it was the urban left which had proved most volatile.²⁰ The problem with the provinces was rather their indifference. Eugen Weber's seminal text *Peasants into Frenchmen* demonstrates a pervading lack of unity and nationalist sentiment among particularly the more peripheral regions.²¹ The successive governments of the Third Republic attempted to encourage unification by making the development of a cohesive communications network and the formation of a standardised national curriculum key policies.

For a number of French citizens at this time, however, the physical and conceptual distance between city and country was not necessarily a bad thing. During the hostilities remote rural areas became a practical retreat for many, and the city environment to which they returned would not have been a pleasant one. The horror of the massacres and the humiliation of defeat struck a huge blow to national confidence, and the charred remains of city streets and public buildings only served as reminders. Although rural areas had also suffered the effects of the war, for the bourgeoisie returned to the midst of urban disarray the distant countryside evoked ideals which were implicitly the opposite of their direct surroundings. With regard to rural landscape painting of the post conflict period, therefore, the concept of 'refuge' in Appleton's terms acquired renewed significance.

The art of the immediate post-war period certainly did not dwell on the bleak spectacle of recent events and the current sense of national dejection. With respect to the paintings in the first Paris Salon after the hostilities in 1872 it was remarked that the artists seemed impervious to the brutality of the previous two years. In his review for the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* Paul Mantz wrote,

²⁰ See TOMBS, 1996, p.47

²¹ See WEBER, 1976, pp.303-338

Un rapide coup d'oeil jeté sur l'exposition démontre que la métamorphose espérée ne s'est pas produite et que le sentiment de l'immense outrage infligé au droit n'a inspiré ni une colère éloquente ni une mélancolie profonde. Sauf quelques oeuvres qui nous rappellent divers épisodes de la guerre, ou qui reportent notre pensée vers cette terre d'Alsace où tant de braves coeurs nous restent obstinément fidèles, la physionomie du Salon diffère peu de celles des expositions qui ont précédé la crise; ...²²

But after much of the urban population had in reality had to seek refuge from the conflicts by fleeing to rural areas, it was conceivably also the case that they sought refuge from the aftermath in the visual escapism of the Salon. Particularly as it was at that time a State-run exhibition, it is perhaps not surprising that the emphasis was more towards optimism and continuity rather than dwelling on the nation's failings.

The pall of apprehension and uncertainty which had formed over the nation, especially Paris, would take years to disperse. For many the post-war unease was prolonged by the strict conservatism which characterised most of the 1870s under the regimes of Louis Adolphe Thiers and the monarchist-leaning République des Ducs of Marshal MacMahon. It was only after the election of Jules Grévy and the installation of the more progressive Opportunist Republic in 1877 that national confidence seems to have re-established itself. In 1880, ten years after the beginning of the Franco-Prussian War, it seems that the French were in a position to take pride in themselves once again after having overcome the difficulties of the previous decade. Some now applauded the landscape artists for maintaining a sense of optimism and restoring a sense of pride in representing their *patrie*. In his introduction to a review of the Salon of 1880, for instance, Maurice du Seigneur wrote an ardent and strongly Republican tribute to the artists' contribution to the nation during the past decade.

²² MANTZ, 1872, p.450

Ces contemplateurs de la riante nature, ces soldats *de génie* qui mettent toutes leurs forces intellectuelles au service de la pensée et du beau, ne désespèrent ni de l'art ni de la France ; et lorsqu'on eut remis l'épée au fourreau, que la rançon des fautes impériales fut payée, que les ruines fumantes du Salon de flammes de 1871 furent éteintes, ils reprirent vaillamment leurs outils de gloire et travaillèrent à la richesse de leur pays.

Pendant les dix premières années de notre République, le sentiment artistique s'est amplifié, étendu en France; on a compris enfin que la splendeur d'un peuple ne tenait point à la fêrule d'un maître tout puissant, mais plutôt au génie même de ce peuple...

A plus forte raison quand le corps humilié se relève, que les yeux regardent le ciel, que les mains sont libres, le coeur bat-il plus fort et est-il tout entier dévoué à la bonne mère Patrie.²³

Images of rural France quickly acquired a rather nationalist significance; they were seen to represent a 'true' depiction of the nation as it always had been. As well as a symbol of refuge the village in particular conveyed a reassuring sense of continuity and community which was a fitting allegory for nationalist ideals. The same connotations are still apparent even where the imagery was subverted, for example in Alphonse de Neuville's *Combat sur les toits*, c.1885 (fig.16). The destructive threat of the Prussian forces and the valiant nature of the French defence seem all the more resounding when the village being fought over is understood as a symbol of national values and tradition. This painting was part of a series of works made in the 1880s to commemorate the war, and is another marker of the nation's coming to terms with their bloody defeat.

The evolving idealisation of the village and the rural environment was not simply a reaction to the conflicts of the early 1870s, however. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, concurrent with the concept of rural savagery, had been the more 'pastoral' idea of the noble peasant working in harmony with the natural world. Largely established by the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau in the eighteenth century, these more positive associations regained popularity in the mid nineteenth century through the novels of George Sand and paintings

²³ Du SEIGNEUR, 1880, pp.XXXI-XXXIII

such as those by Jean-François Millet. A general interest in provincial culture was more formally recognised by the recording of historic buildings in the *Voyages pittoresques et romantiques dans l'ancienne France*, and the formation of intellectual societies such as the Académie Celtique in 1807 and the Société des Antiquaires de France in 1814.²⁴

Many of these more positive perceptions of rural life were born from an increased ability to travel and a growing familiarisation of the urban bourgeois classes with the provinces. The tourist industry was beginning to flourish and communities which gave the impression of isolation from centralisation and modernisation were far more intriguing. It was not only the accessibility which attracted people to the countryside, however. There was also a strong desire to find relief from the heavily industrialised and over-populated urban environment which was becoming increasingly oppressive. The popularity of rural landscape paintings echoed such sentiments. André Michel wrote in his review of the 1888 Salon,

Réfugions nous aux champs. La misère n'y est jamais si noire ni si triste que dans les villes, où tout se complique de contrastes si cruels, de disparates sociales et aussi de littérature; la bonne nature communique aux pauvres gens qui vivent près d'elle un peu de sa beauté et aux artistes qui vont lui demander conseil un peu de son apaisement: de là, dans toutes nos paysanneries, un fond d'optimisme qui repose.²⁵

Again the idea of the 'refuge' played an important role, as it had done even before the Franco-Prussian War. James Lehning, for example, in his book *Peasant and French*, has summarised Sand's writing as '[turning] the countryside into both a refuge and a source of beauty.'²⁶ His explanation states, 'A refuge by its very nature could not share in those events, but instead was a place in which full participants in the work of the nation could restore themselves before returning to the fray.'²⁷ Similarly to the rustic excursion made by the

²⁴ See BELMONT, 1975, passim

²⁵ MICHEL, A., 1888, p.139

²⁶ LEHNING, 1995, p.15

²⁷ LEHNING, 1995, p.16

bourgeois tourist, it was nonetheless the ability to return to the standards of the bourgeois urban lifestyle which contributed to their enjoyment and idealisation of rural imagery.

The rural environment was becoming ever more synonymous with the ideas of health and contentment that might be associated with a summer holiday in the provinces. It was also becoming popular to keep a country house in which to spend more prolonged periods of *villégiature*; a residential retreat. The model of the idealised rural lifestyle was increasingly being considered as a more permanent alternative to the pressures and complexities of the contemporary urban setting. Émile Michel wrote in his response to the Salon of 1880, for example, ‘Une époque lassée comme est la nôtre devait être amenée à rechercher dans la nature la simplicité que seule celle-ci possède et ces impressions immédiates qu’on ne peut trouver qu’en elle.’²⁸ To a certain extent it was the primitive nature of the rural community which was part of its attraction. F. de Lagenevais identified this ‘naive simplicity’ as part of the legacy of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who believed that modern society was inherently artificial and corrupt and encouraged the idea of the return to nature.²⁹ The former described the philosopher as ‘un des pères inconscients du paysage actuel’.³⁰ In terms of Appleton’s theories it was not so much the idea of ‘emancipation from the subjugation of nature’ which gave the most appeal, but more the return to the ‘natural sign-stimuli’. The idea of the small community, working together in harmony with the natural environment, represented for the bourgeoisie reconciliation with nature and with the fundamental values which were being lost in the convolution of urban living.

The idea of rural France as the place which satisfies, in Appleton’s terms, ‘*all* our biological needs,’³¹ would apply both in a physical and moral sense. The Lorraine artist Albert

²⁸ MICHEL, É., 1880, p.908

²⁹ See Rousseau, J.-J., *Du contrat social* and *Émile*, first published in Paris, 1756

³⁰ De LAGENEVAIS, 1875, p.730

³¹ APPLETON, 1996, p.63; and APPLETON, 1990, p.15

Rigolot's painting *La moisson en Seine et Marne*, (fig.17), for example, depicts one of the most common interpretations of the village motif with its church and belfry, surrounded by houses, surrounded by fields. Such imagery depicts the community as self-contained, with all the basic necessities for life – nourishment, shelter and also moral and spiritual guidance. The dominance of the church in paintings like Rigolot's could serve both as a visual focus within the composition and as a symbolic focus within the community and the surrounding landscape. To the modern eye paintings like these may appear rustic and benign. Within the context of the Third Republic's secularisation laws being brought in during the 1880s, however, the status of the village church was highly contentious. A large number of village priests were resistant often to any change and were usually supported by their parishioners.³² Considered as the stronghold of traditional Catholicism as well as rural tradition in general, the narrative of some paintings such as Rigolot's conveyed the benefits of this type of society. The church and its spire marked the village as a place of long-established values and traditions which were inherently Christian and anti-modern.

Those in urban areas were certainly concerned about rural change, although it seems it was more for selfish reasons than out of empathy for their peasant compatriots. In contrast to the rapid modernisation, expansion and industrialisation of the cities, the rustic village offered a vision of France which in comparison was comfortingly unchanging. The expansion of the national transport network not only facilitated tourists' visiting the countryside, however, but also allowed the rural population to leave it. With the increasing number of jobs available in industrialised areas it is not surprising that rural areas were at threat of depopulation. The incentives to migrate were increasingly compelling towards the end of the 1870s and throughout the 1880s when a combination of natural and economic factors plunged the nation into agricultural recession. The sensitivities to such issues in the landscape paintings

³² See McMillan, J., "'Priest hits girl': on the front line in the 'war of the Frances'" in CLARK and KAISER (Eds.), 2003, pp.77-101

of the time are evident in the melancholic poignancy which characterised many works. Paintings such as Léon Pelouse's *Le Soir*, c.1885, and *Cernay, près de Rambouillet*, c.1887 (figs.18 and 19), are striking demonstrations of such concerns. John House cites the Salon critic J. Noulens's description of the former as revealing 'a passionate love of nature in its desolation' and inviting 'sorrow and reverie.' He discusses the critic's interpretation and its relationship with the contextual issues of rural depopulation concluding that Noulens could equally have been referring to the mood of late autumn. However, the correlation between the sparse landscapes, seasonal and temporal references, and the dilapidated houses is particularly evident in *Cernay, près de Rambouillet*. The works appear to accentuate the aspect of human desertion and not just natural desolation.³³

Others who did not portray such a stark depiction of the rural situation may have intended to record the traditional countryside before it changed unrecognisably. Émile Michel, for example, wrote in his review of the 1880 Salon,

... on s'était enfin avisé que la France pouvait offrir aux peintres quelques ressources et qu'il y aurait peut-être intérêt à montrer à ses habitants ses forêts, ses vallées, ses plages, toutes ces beautés naturelles dont un si grand nombre ont été depuis altérées ou détruites.³⁴

It is clear that a sense of generalised nostalgia affected many of the rural landscapes of this period, producing a rather 'rose-tinted' view of the peasant existence. Now that this part of the French culture was under threat, not only from depopulation but also modernisation, it appears to have acquired new value. Rather than being viewed in a derogatory way, the 'backwardness' of the rural population began to be seen, no longer as uncivilised, but as a quaint sign of innocence and tradition which should be protected.

³³ Noulens, J., *Artistes français et étrangers au Salon de 1877*, Paris, 1885, cited in HOUSE, 1995, p.158

³⁴ MICHEL, É., 1880, pp.908-909

Considering the village motif in a general sense it is clear that it represented fundamental values and concerns which were made all the more significant by the contextual circumstances of the 1870s and 1880s. Its appeal lay increasingly in aspects which may not have been expressly demonstrated in the paintings but which were encapsulated implicitly in the symbolism of the motif. It is true that the stylistic affiliations of artists and audiences fluctuated and their political opinions and social interests varied. However, the instinctive appeal of the village landscape in Appleton's terms could be recognised by most and therefore manipulated further to apply to contextual demand – whether explicitly on the canvas, or in the mind of the viewer.

Landscape painting and the village in the Parisian art world

The wide range of meanings and connotations which could be associated with the village motif meant that it could be found appropriate in a variety of forums and appreciated by a wide range of people. The potential appeal of paintings of villages has already been established in both aesthetic and social terms. It was, however, the consequent exploitation of this type of landscape and its status in the Parisian art world, which was ultimately responsible for the motif's prevalence. For the artists creating such artworks, artistic influence and market forces were significant in encouraging the kind of paintings they produced. Artists' attitudes and responses to the fluctuations in their artistic environment contributed to the way that the motif was presented as much as the more general contextual and aesthetic concerns of the nation. Taking a generally chronological approach, therefore, this section will consider some of the artists' motives in relation to the demands of the forums for which the works were destined; for example public museums, the annual Paris Salon exhibition and the private market. It will also examine the various artistic influences,

both from institutional authorities as well as the precedents established by previous artists, which would equally have had a distinct effect on the development of landscape art.

1870-1879

First of all, the influence of the State was perhaps the most significant in encouraging the type of art which was produced and also the tastes of the artistic audience in general.³⁵ It had a strong bearing over art through its patronage of specific artists, subject matter and styles. The State museums and galleries to which paintings were sent were crucial in defining artistic standards for the general public, particularly in more provincial areas. Recent discussions on the early Third Republic's policies on fine art in the 1870s have demonstrated its attempts to return to the more traditional and academic conventions of history painting. Such conservative values were, however, to the detriment of the more modern categories of landscape and genre.³⁶ Largely responsible for their implementation was the Marquis Philippe de Chennevières who acted as MacMahon's Directeur des Beaux-Arts from the end of 1873 until May 1878. His conservatism with regard to landscape, in particular, was rather extreme. In encouraging a return to the academic origins of art his ideas implied a return to the ideals of the imagined and strictly composed landscapes of the *paysage historique* or *antique*. Championed in the first instance by Claude Gellée (known as Claude Lorrain) and Nicolas Poussin its roots began in the seventeenth century, later to be institutionalised in the late eighteenth century by Pierre-Henri de Valenciennes.

Apart from the more obvious academic sympathies of official bodies such as the Académie des Beaux-Arts and the École des Beaux-Arts, Chennevières was not alone in his opinions.

³⁵ See SHERMAN, 1989, especially pp.16-54

³⁶ See Mayo Roos, J., ., "Herbivores versus Herbiphobes: Landscape painting and the State", in HOUSE, 1995, pp.40-51; and House,J., "Authority Versus Independence: The position of French landscape in the 1870s" in THOMSON, R., 1998, pp.15-34 ; and HOUSE, 2000.

Voices of support for the academic landscape arose as late as 1880. The critic Roger-Ballu, for example, decried the suppression of the Prix de Rome de Paysage which had promoted precisely the Italianate, neo-classical landscapes of the *paysage historique*.³⁷ G. Dargenty also wrote in 1883, ‘Seigneur, rendez-nous Claude Gellée et délivrez-nous du naturalisme.’³⁸ Artists such as Paul Flandrin and Albert Girard, for example, were cited by Salon reviewers as among the last of the tradition.³⁹ Flandrin’s *Souvenir de Provence*, 1874 (fig.20) is an example. Chennevières was, nonetheless, voicing the concerns of a minority and making a provocative move against the recent but well established genre of the *paysage pittoresque* or *portraitiste*. As described by Louis Gonse in his 1874 Salon review, ‘Il y a quarante ans à peine qu’existe, à l’état de genre distinct, la peinture de paysage, c’est à dire la peinture portraitiste de la nature.’⁴⁰

The artists of the École de 1830, such as Camille Corot, Jean-François Millet, Théodore Rousseau and Charles-François Daubigny, had succeeded in laying the foundations of the *paysage portraitiste*. Most famously painting the Forest of Fontainebleau at Barbizon, their work concentrated on depicting nature from real life. Once controversial, they were now greatly revered and their approach institutionalised as a model for many French landscape artists. Any hopes of a full return to the *paysage historique*, and what academics perceived as the origin of formal landscape painting, were unrealistic and negated the status and significance of the *paysage portraitiste* within contemporary art. The status of landscape painting was later acknowledged, for example, in a review of the 1887 Salon by Gustave Ollendorf: ‘Le paysage est l’art dominant de notre siècle, celui qui s’est le plus grandement élargi et qui a réalisé les plus brillants progrès.’⁴¹

³⁷ ROGER-BALLU, 1880, p.52

³⁸ DARGENTY, 1883, p.159

³⁹ CLARETIE, 1876, p.180; and ROGER-BALLU, 1875, p.52

⁴⁰ GONSE, 1874, p.147; see also MÉNARD, 1870, p.55, re the ‘paysage-portrait’

⁴¹ OLLENDORF, 1887, p.77

Chennevières's dislike for modern landscape painting has been explained by Jane Mayo Roos: 'Landscape's connotations of individualism were far too disturbing for the government, which sought to promote an image of community and accord.'⁴² He could not ignore the importance of the *paysage portraitiste* completely, however, so the genre was approached with extreme selectivity. The proportion of landscape paintings purchased by the State decreased significantly under Chennevières's authority. Those acquired from the Paris Salon of 1877 were therefore an especially emphatic assertion of governmental preference, when only five out of thirty-three paintings bought by the State were landscapes. This compares to thirty-six out of one hundred and twenty in 1872 before Chennevières was appointed.⁴³ With the need for the government to unify the nation as a Republic after the unrest of the early 1870s, however, the *paysage portraitiste* did serve a purpose in its ability to promote a particular image of France. Those landscape paintings which were bought by the State at this time to send to the regional museums were characterised by particularly passive visions of rural terrain and deferential peasants.

Busson's *Le village de Lavardin (Loir-et-Cher)* (fig.21) was one of the five landscape paintings bought from the Salon of 1877 and demonstrates well the type of imagery the State was keen to encourage. House has explained its appeal to the State, describing the picture as '... a sort of history painting – an expression of the seamless continuity of the history of the land in which the 'true' France was rooted ...'⁴⁴ The fact that the subject depicted is a village is an intrinsic part of the image's significance. The symbol of the unified community in a rich and fertile setting, apparently unaffected by conflict and illuminated by the sun after a passing storm, was a fitting metaphor for what the Third Republic envisioned France should be. With its grandiose size of over 2 metres across, the implicit significance of Busson's painting clearly went beyond the benign rustic scene of 'refuge' and escapism and

⁴² Roos, J.M., in HOUSE, 1995, pp.47-48

⁴³ See VAISSE, 1995, pp.147-168, for an analysis of State purchase policy during the Third Republic.

⁴⁴ See HOUSE, 1995, cat.32; and HOUSE, 2000, for a full discussion of this painting.

instead acted as a monument to nationalist ideals. Rather than the intellectual civility implied by the insertion of antique columns and people dressed in togas, the symbol of the village with its current associations could cast an equally long-established, but emphatically French, sense of moral hegemony over the landscape. In short, it constituted a more pertinent response to the artistic and cultural environment of the Third Republic. Twelve years later, in reviewing the Exposition Universelle of 1889, Mantz viewed the rustic cottage as a direct replacement for the Roman temple saying, ‘le petit temple en carton qu’on avait continué de construire sur la colline s’écroule et se trouve subitement remplacé par une humble maisonette de paysan que surmonte la fumée d’un pauvre foyer.’⁴⁵ Between the immediate modernity of the urban landscape and the remoteness of the Roman antique, the motif of the village appears to have constituted an acceptable compromise.⁴⁶

Despite some discerning concessions towards the *paysage portraitiste*, Chennevières’s policies met with some fervent condemnation. The conventions of the *paysage historique* which he advocated proved far too restrictive. Eugène Véron, for example, wrote in his 1878 Salon review, ‘Ce genre de paysage... a fini par être étouffé par l’étroitesse de sa formule et par l’erreur du principe sur lequel il reposait. Il a fini par la convention et par l’ennui intense que s’en dégageait.’⁴⁷ Reaction against Chennevières’s policies was not only verbal. Independent art groups were established, such as the Société des Aquarellistes, and exhibited mostly on the premises of private dealers. The 1st Impressionist exhibition in 1874 was, however, the most extreme response to the authoritarian stance of the official artistic bodies.⁴⁸ Artists such as Claude Monet, Camille Pissarro, Alfred Sisley and Pierre-Auguste Renoir, who were founding members of the group, painted modern everyday landscapes in

⁴⁵ MANTZ, 1889, p.44

⁴⁶ See Duranty’s explanation of the modernisation of landscape, DURANTY, 1877, p.572

⁴⁷ VÉRON, 1878, p.243

⁴⁸ Initially calling themselves the ‘Société anonyme des artistes, peintres, graveurs, etc.’ the term Impressionism was coined in a review of the 1874 exhibition by the satirical journalist Louis Leroy, ‘L’Exposition des Impressionists’, *Le Charivari*, 25 April 1874, pp.79-80, transcribed in BERSON, 1996, pp.25-26. See also REWALD, (1946) 1980, pp.309-340.

the open air, defying all academic conventions regarding composition, form, colour and subject matter. They attracted as much criticism for their radical approach as Chennevières had done for his conservatism.

The Impressionists' association with the private sector in particular encouraged ideas that they were simply painting quick and easy works and capitalising on controversy. Their first exhibition seemed to confirm the concerns of commentators such as Georges Lafenestre, who as well as being a critic also worked within the *Ministre des Beaux-Arts*. In his review of the Salon of 1873 he wrote, 'que les entraînements lucratifs des popularités faciles détruisent, chez beaucoup d'artistes, le goût des travaux lents et des études progressives.'⁴⁹ What must have been particularly unsettling for the artistic establishment, however, was the impact this young group of artists was having, independent of official sanction. Anatole de Montaiglon wrote in 1875,

On fait des ébauches, des esquisses; la plupart du temps ce ne sont plus des oeuvres, mais des improvisations, ce ne sont plus des tableaux, mais des esquisses.

... La mode, aussi bien chez ceux qui achètent que chez ceux qui peignent, est aux *impressionistes*; le mot est fait et il a cours.⁵⁰

They were finding success without the intervention of State patronage or acceptance into the annual Paris Salon exhibition, elements which had always been instrumental in shaping the development of French art.

The Paris Salon was by far the most formative event in the artistic calendar. Managed by the *Académie des Beaux-Arts* it was not strictly speaking a State-run exhibition. The State's *Directeur des Beaux-Arts* was, however, responsible for regulating the administration of both the *Académie* and the Salon. The policies and opinions of government ministers such as

⁴⁹ LAFENESTRE, 1873, p.475

⁵⁰ De MONTAIGLON, 1875, p.20

Chennevières were therefore inevitably highly influential. Despite the constant controversy over the organisation of the Salon, especially the selection process, the exhibition's prominence was still unrivalled in France, if not the world. Throughout the nineteenth century, it was acceptance into the Salon which had been the official marker of an artist's quality and the doorway to sales and success. For this reason, however, fears of commercialism to the detriment of quality were rife. The critic Jules Claretie, for example, referred to the Salon in 1876 as a 'profusion commerciale'.⁵¹ And Monet, when considering submitting to it in 1880 precisely to improve his sales, called it the 'bazar officiel'.⁵² Chennevières's attempts to return to a strict academicism were symptomatic of a long history of conflict between the interests of the State to encourage high art and the needs of the artists to publicise their work and further their careers.

In this climate of official conservatism, the selecting jury was under increasing pressure to uphold the standards of previous generations. As a consequence innovation was often substituted with mediocrity as artists attempted to imitate their predecessors in order to be accepted.⁵³ Duranty claimed in 1877 that the landscapists '... ne songent guère à la nature, ils ne pensent qu'à la médaille, aux genres de motifs et aux procédés de facture par lesquels on est à peu près sûr d'attendrir les juges qui la décernent ...'.⁵⁴ Following Salon precedent, however, the Académie and its jury's conservatism appears to have focused, more pragmatically, on landscapes attempting to emulate the esteemed example of the École de 1830.

Corot, in particular, was seen as the father figure of the École de 1830. Because his work had originally developed under the auspices of Valenciennes and then blossomed in

⁵¹ CLARETIE, 1876, p.1

⁵² Monet, letter to Duret, 8 March 1880, transcribed in WILDENSTEIN, 1979, letter 173

⁵³ See MAINARDI, 1993, pp.9-35

⁵⁴ DURANTY, 1877, p.62

experimenting with painting *en plein air*, it appealed equally to the conservative academics as it did to the radical Impressionists. After Corot's death in 1875 the critic Jules Buisson wrote,

Avec Corot nous montons au point culminant de la peinture moderne du paysage. Jamais ne s'est vue, en effet, si noble intervention de l'homme dans la nature, ni en France ni en Europe, depuis Poussin et Claude Lorrain, ces deux grands maîtres français dont le nom revient à chaque instant sous notre plume.⁵⁵

Any appreciation of the Impressionists was resisted by most of the Salon juries; however the influence of Corot's work is also clear in some of their paintings. Strong comparisons can be drawn, for example, between Monet's *Le printemps, à travers les branches*, 1878 (fig.22) and Corot's *L'Étang à l'arbre penché* (fig.23). This is not to say that other artists from the École de 1830 were not also extremely influential. Lafenestre categorised the landscapists in the 1890 Salon on the Champ de Mars:

Parmi les Français on constate une double tendance: les uns, séduits par les rêves de Corot préfèrent par-dessus tout l'harmonie générale et douce de la peinture; les autres, marchant sur les pas moins trompeurs de Théodore Rousseau et des Hollandais, apportent dans leurs étude de la nature un esprit plus scientifique et une soumission plus scrupuleuse.⁵⁶

Daubigny's art too, although De Lostalot later described him as 'un maître de second ordre',⁵⁷ showed a lasting dominance in the paintings of many artists. His coastal and river views were particularly influential, as well as his stylistic techniques. Jean-François Millet, Gustave Courbet, Constant Troyon and countless others from the same era, were universally upheld as the new masters of French painting. The number of references made to the École de 1830 throughout this thesis is a small demonstration of their impact on subsequent French art.

⁵⁵ BUISSON, 1875, p.331

⁵⁶ LAFENESTRE, 1890(b), p.932

⁵⁷ De LOSTALOT, 1891, p.112

The prevalence of these artists' works during the 1870s was of added significance to the effect they were to have on the development of landscape painting at this time. Within the space of the same ten years several of the main figures in French rural and landscape painting died: Théodore Rousseau (1868), Jean-François Millet and Camille Corot (1875), Narcisse Diaz (1876), Gustave Courbet (1877) and Charles-François Daubigny (1878). Their oeuvres were then immortalised in a succession of retrospective exhibitions which continued into the 1880s. These included an especially large collective tribute in the galleries of the dealer Paul Durand-Ruel in 1878, a response to the poor representation of the artists in the Exposition Universelle.⁵⁸ The 382 paintings exhibited included works by all of those cited in this paragraph and others. Not only was the work of the École de 1830 in extensive circulation during the early Third Republic, therefore; at a time when society craved security and continuity, pressure was mounting regarding the continuity of their legacy and the fate of the landscape genre. Chennevières's failure to recognise the importance of such artists contributed significantly to his demise. Already unpopular due to his proposals for reform, the resounding criticism of the French art exhibition in the Exposition Universelle in 1878 saw the end of his reign as Director. He was briefly replaced before the victory of the Opportunist Republic in the elections of 1879.

1879-1890

With Jules Ferry installed as the new government's Ministre de l'instruction publique, des cultes et des beaux-arts, the oppressive academicism which had overshadowed most of the 1870s came to a close.⁵⁹ The statistics regarding State envois to museums during the 1870s and 1880s makes clear the differences in art policy between the regimes. According to

⁵⁸ *Exposition rétrospective de tableaux et dessins des maîtres modernes*, Galeries Durand Ruel, Paris, 15 July – 1 October 1878

⁵⁹ For a more extensive analysis of the French State's role in the arts see MAINARDI, 1993, pp.37-55; and with regard to landscape painting see Roos, J.M., "Herbivores versus Herbiphobes: Landscape painting and the State" in HOUSE, 1995, pp.40-51

Daniel Sherman's analysis, 40.2% of the envois of the 1870s were academic history paintings, while 30.1% constituted landscapes. In the 1880s, however, only 26.7% were history paintings whereas the largest proportion, 33.2% were landscapes, followed closely by genre paintings which had also previously been snubbed as informal and non-academic.⁶⁰ In Ferry's first prize-giving address, at the Salon of 1879, he encouraged the development of individuality in art as well as the *plein air* approach. In doing so he established the administration as liberal and progressive and representing the opposite of the values that had made Chennevières so unpopular.⁶¹

Ferry's speech was effective in securing his popularity among artists. The details of State policy were affected through rigorous reforms by the sous-secrétaire d'état des beaux-arts, Édouard Turquet, whose aim was to 'republicanise' the arts administration by making it more democratic and inclusive. It certainly seems that more artists felt included by his policies as the number of entries to the Salon of the following year soared to 7289, about twice the number accepted the year following Chennevières's appointment.⁶² Criticism arose from right-leaning factions, however. When Turquet was called to defend his policies, for example, the Bonapartist deputy Robert Mitchell responded saying,

The Revolution has happened, and the new strata have invaded the exposition, and the pressure from the bottom upward is such... that little by little the great names of painting have been pushed out of the catalogue and are staying away from a Salon that is nothing more than a public gathering, a club.⁶³

The Académie was not supportive either and William Bouguereau, succeeded by Paul Baudry, both resigned from the position of president of the Salon painting jury. The Salon

⁶⁰ See SHERMAN, 1989, Table 6, p.49

⁶¹ See Chennevières's prize-giving speech reproduced in the Paris Salon catalogue of 1880. See also HOUSE, 2004, p.198 for discussion of Ferry's arts policy.

⁶² See MAINARDI, 1993, p.47, Table 3

⁶³ "Chambre des Députés, séance du mardi 18 mai 1880, Discussion de l'interpellation de M. Robert Mitchell sur la direction donnée aux beaux-arts", *Journal Officiel*, 19 May 1880, pp.5389-5396 at p.5392, transcribed in MAINARDI, 1993, p.79

selection process became embroiled in broader political controversy when Angelo Francia's bust of the Republic, which had been purchased by the State, was rejected. As some members of the jury were supporters of a charity for Christian schools, Turquet claimed that they were deliberately attacking the Republican policies on the secularisation of education. Because the *Ministre de l'Instruction Publique* was in charge of religion as well as the fine arts, the two issues were easily linked. It was clear that the Salon could not continue as it was amid such uproar.⁶⁴

Ferry's solution to the crisis was to relinquish state control of the exhibition completely, passing authority to an independent committee of artists, the *Société des artistes français*. An aptly democratic solution, this decisive move was effective in distancing the state from Salon debate, which hitherto had brought nothing but problems. Patricia Mainardi has characterised the Republic's approach to politics at this time as a desire 'to compromise, if necessary, in order to have peace among factions.'⁶⁵ Similarly, Ferry had managed to quell the issues which gave groups like the Impressionists their *raison d'être*.⁶⁶ Although he may have managed to pacify the voices of discontent, however, the result was not so beneficial to the Salon. As the State withdrew its commission and made unsuccessful attempts at re-establishing an exhibition of academic art with the *Triennale*, the status of the Salon was uncertain.⁶⁷ Whether it could retain its position of supremacy as an independent venture was yet to be seen.

Although the Salon now became more accessible to more progressive works, change in public preference was more gradual. Having evolved from the Salons of the 1870s, by the 1880s the most prominent Salon artists were those who had worked directly under the *École*

⁶⁴ For a detailed analysis of responses to Turquet's reforms see MAINARDI, 1993, pp.74-81

⁶⁵ MAINARDI, 1993, p.81

⁶⁶ HOUSE, 2004, p.198

⁶⁷ See MAINARDI, 1993, especially at pp.112-116

de 1830's masters. In 1881, Buisson wrote, 'Le premier groupe est celui des vétérans, des successeurs immédiats de la grande génération.'⁶⁸ Among these he listed artists such as Busson, Emmanuel Lansyer, Alexandre Ségé, Camille Bernier, Henri Harpignies and Alexandre Defaux – all of whom are discussed to some extent in this thesis. Mostly older and more established, their work represented another link in the progression from the romanticism and realism of preceding artistic trends to what had become categorised as 'naturalism'. Although in modern times it is Impressionism which receives the most attention, it was naturalism which was perceived as the dominant movement during the 1870s and 1880s. A rather all-encompassing term, from which the Impressionists were not excluded, 'naturalism' was used to describe the majority of contemporary scenes.

Pelouse was one of the foremost landscape artists of this new wave of artists and according to the critic Alfred de Lostalot was typical of his generation. Successful in the Salon, he had a large number of student followers and received much acclaim. In his obituary De Lostalot described his status within the hierarchy of landscape artists,

Depuis la mort de Daubigny, le dernier de la pléiade illustre issue du mouvement artistique de 1830, il avait pris en quelque sorte la place de chef laissée vacante, quoique d'autres non moins vaillants, Harpignies et Cazin, eussent en réalité une plus haute situation dans l'art. Pelouse avait, sur ces maîtres, l'avantage considérable de personnifier les tendances modernes; aussi a-t-il fait souche nombreuse d'élèves et d'imitateurs.⁶⁹

De Lostalot's idea of 'personifying modern tendencies', however, also seemed to involve a perceived inferiority to the École de 1830. His description of the artist continued:

⁶⁸ BUISSON, 1881, p.75

⁶⁹ De LOSTALOT, 1891, p.112

Il n'a ni la grâce poétique de Corot, ni la puissance subjective des peintures de Rousseau, de Millet et de Troyon. Observateur des phénomènes naturels, il suit, avec moins d'éclat, le chemin tracé par Courbet, et ses ressources de palette sont loin d'égaler celles dont disposait Daubigny, qui n'est pourtant qu'un maître de second ordre: l'équitable postérité lui fera sa place à côté de ce dernier.⁷⁰

While his art won much acclaim for its precision of execution, he was among those criticised for the photographic appearance of his works and the lack of 'soul'.⁷¹

Partly due to the influence of Impressionism, accurate observation through painting *en plein air* had become a defining feature of naturalist art. It was largely considered that the conveyance of a 'true' portrayal of nature was key, although visual fact in itself was not seen as sufficient. Lafenestre wrote in response to the Salon of 1873,

...beaucoup confondent encore la réalité avec la vérité, regardent l'imitation froide et superficielle des formes colorées comme le but suprême de la peinture, prennent le trompe-œil pour de l'art, et s'écartent avec horreur de toute invention, de toute émotion, de toute poésie, comme d'un dangereux mensonge.⁷²

For over a decade Salon reviews repeated concerns that paintings resembled mere photographs, with no intellectual or 'poetic' content. Véron criticised the apparently indiscriminate way that subject matter was selected and depicted. He wrote in his review of the Salon of 1885, '... aujourd'hui les paysagistes peignent à peu près indifféremment tous les sites qui leur tombent sous les yeux, en vertu de cet axiôme que, en peinture, le sujet n'est rien et l'exécution est tout.'⁷³

Throughout the 1870s and 1880s, and as the Salon became more open-minded, the boundaries as to what could be considered picturesque were constantly being broadened.

⁷⁰ De LOSTALOT, 1891, p.112

⁷¹ e.g. See DAYOT, 1884, p.79-80, and LAFENESTRE, 1873, p.60

⁷² LAFENESTRE, 1873, p.475

⁷³ VÉRON, 1885, p.222

Strict distinctions between genres of painting were becoming less important and formerly insignificant subject matter, such as villages and rural life, was achieving the status of history paintings. As, for example, in Busson's depiction of Lavardin. The altering status of these rural scenes was also reflected in the size of the canvases on which they appeared. An even larger example than Busson's was the Champenois artist Émile Barau's enormous village motif in *Jardinage d'automne* (fig.24) which appeared in the Salon of 1885 and measured 2.6 metres across. In earlier years this type of imagery would simply have been declared unworthy of such a large canvas. In 1870, for example, the critic Henri Delaborde complained,

Il semble que pour beaucoup d'entre eux tout se vaille dans la nature, que les beautés les plus inégales aient devant l'art les mêmes droits, et qu'un chemin entre deux haies ou quelques arbres au bord d'une mare soient tout aussi dignes d'être reproduits sur une grande toile que les majestueux sites chers à Claude Lorrain et à Poussin.⁷⁴

In 1885, however, the size of Barau's painting does not appear to have drawn criticism.

André Michel applauded the painting in his review in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, saying

... à la fin de nos longues séances dans les salles poudreuses, nous venons reposer nos yeux fatigués et notre esprit lassé par tant de grandes machines prétentieuses, de mythologies plates et d'académies médiocres, devant cet humble potager où un simple villageois sarcle de simples choux...⁷⁵

Michel's review is significant of the growing current of taste against the pretensions of academicism. Not only could paintings of rural France appeal to the *peuple* through nationalism, but they also removed the sense of elitism which accompanied most history paintings. The fact that the Opportunist Republic was openly encouraging and purchasing such naturalist art was not mere coincidence.

⁷⁴ e.g. See DELABORDE, 1870, p.708

⁷⁵ MICHEL, A., 1885, p.482

The popularising of Salon imagery through naturalism would also have favoured artists attempting to appeal to the private market, however. The growing number of *nouveaux-riches* that was emerging from the industrial revolution meant an increased demand in paintings to decorate domestic interiors. Rustic scenes of villages were usually deemed more suitable for display in private bourgeois residences rather than public buildings and museums. Considering Barau's painting, for example, in continuing his review Michel congratulated the unheroic intimacy of the work and its 'poetry'. Yet these were qualities usually attributed to works of a smaller size. Interestingly, Barau's accompanying Salon exhibit *L'Été en Champagne à Fresne* (fig.25), also showing a village, was on a rather small scale compared to most Salon paintings, only 75 centimetres across. While the smaller painting may have been deemed more appropriate for a private residence, however, the attention received by the larger demonstrates the effectiveness of size in the Salon for promotional purposes.

Now that the Salon had been made more accessible and was controlled by artists, debate as to whether its self-appointed position of superiority in exhibiting art was legitimate increased. There was little to distinguish it from independent exhibiting ventures, which now also represented a credible forum for artistic success. Although commercialism was largely blamed for the demise of quality in Salon painting, this did not necessarily mean that private enterprises were perceived as exhibiting substandard work – on the contrary. Martha Ward's extensive analysis of private exhibitions during the 1870s and 1880s has described dealers' aspirations of exclusivity. She writes, 'the ideal private exhibition came to be represented as a haven for aesthetic appreciation that was removed from the crass commerce of the art market ...'.⁷⁶ Dealers began to distinguish themselves by adapting their exhibition spaces. Georges Petit's galleries were particularly renowned for being modern and luxurious. At

⁷⁶ WARD, 1991, p.599. See rest of article for general analysis.

their opening, for example, a review was published in the journal *La Vie Parisienne* comparing the venue to that of the Salon:

Bien décidément les Halles centrales de la Peinture ont fait leur temps. Rien de plus démodé, de plus commun, de plus nauséabond que cet immense bazar des Champs-Élysées où se succède les voitures, les fromages, et les tableaux. ... Toute idée vulgaire ou hostile disparaît rien qu'à soulever ce grand rideau de velours sur cette vaste galerie tapissée d'étoffe rouge, où les cadres scintillent, où les couleurs éclatent harmonieuses et chaudes sur ce fond calculé si à point.⁷⁷

Even in showing a wide range of artists, as the Salon did, the dealers' independently coordinated selectivity meant that the sense of a commercial free-for-all, was avoided.

Reviewing Petit's *Exposition Internationale* in 1885 De Lostalot remarked,

D'École, il n'y en a plus: chacun va où sa fantaisie le pousse, consciemment ou non, suit les impulsions de son oeil... On trouve tous les tempéraments et tous les goûts. ... Chez M. Petit tout le monde a du talent...⁷⁸

The Impressionists had demonstrated the potential of the private market since 1874 and the creation of various artist societies and *cercles* showed likewise. Particularly at that time, the stylistic flexibility on offer to artists was a considerable advantage. Lafenestre wrote in his review of the Impressionist and Aquarelliste exhibitions, 'Bien qu'elles ne soient organisées sans grand luxe, le public qui les visite est assez nombreux pour prouver aux artistes que le temps de leur libération est venu, s'ils y apportent quelque résolution.'⁷⁹ The different markets available to the Impressionists through dealers such as Paul Durand-Ruel, Georges Petit and Boussod & Valadon were significant in their eventual acceptance as important artists of the late nineteenth century. With the increasing strength and diversity of the private art market, and the resulting opportunities for artists to paint and sell whatever they could negotiate, dependence on the Salon had diminished. In these years which led to the splitting

⁷⁷ ANON. (1), 1882, p.119

⁷⁸ De LOSTALOT, 1885, p.529

⁷⁹ LAFENESTRE, 1879, p.479

of the Salon into two separately run exhibitions in 1890 – what Mainardi refers to as the ‘End of the Salon’ – it was less and less the authority of academics which dictated the type of art which artists produced.⁸⁰ Towards the end of the 1880s, the dogma of the École de 1830 became more distant, and the art world opened to the possibilities of experimental styles such as pointillism, symbolism and aestheticism, which brought together the ideals of observation and decorative effect.⁸¹ By this time, however, it appears to have been more the success of the market which influenced the choice of exhibits in the Salon rather than the other way round.

It was from this context, therefore, that the use of the village motif in French landscape painting evolved. Its prevalence throughout the growing diversity of styles and artistic ideologies is a reflection of the imagery’s wide-ranging significance. From the more conservative traditionalists to the defiant radicals, it was widely accepted as a fundamental element of the French landscape. Apart from the rather general fashions and academic whims of the art world as an isolated entity, the effects of the social, political and cultural environment were clearly critical in determining demand for the motif and the manner in which artists treated it. For the artist and his urban audience these first twenty years of the Third Republic had brought among other things war, recession, industrialisation, urban overcrowding and rural depopulation. Considering the village motif and its treatment as a response to the cultural demands of this society one can not only appreciate their attitudes towards the nation’s provinces, but also their values and concerns within their own urban context.

⁸⁰ MAINARDI, 1993

⁸¹ e.g. See HAMEL, 1887, p.488; and LAFENESTRE, 1890(a), p.659

The landscape artists Claude Monet and Henri Harpignies were both prominent figures within the Parisian art world between 1870 and 1890. The different roles they assumed, however, were directly opposing. Monet, as an Impressionist, predicated against the academic conventions of Salon art, while Harpignies, on the contrary, tried to uphold them. Nonetheless, strong similarities arise among the imagery used by both artists, particularly in their paintings of villages. This has not gone unnoticed by modern art historians, for example Richard Thomson has written, ‘Monet’s views of Vétheuil and Harpignies’s of Hérisson, however different they look, present fundamentally the same image of the archetypal French village, solid and vernacular...’⁸² Monet’s *Vétheuil*, 1879 (fig.26), for example, and Harpignies’s *La mare à Hérissons* (in fact Saint-Privé) from the same year (fig.27), show very similar images of traditional rural France, or what could be termed *la France profonde*.⁸³ However, the comparisons between the artists and their use of this sort of imagery have yet to be analysed further.

The similarities between Monet’s and Harpignies’s iconography are particularly striking in their paintings from after 1878-9 when both, coincidentally, established homes in the rural provinces. The change was most marked in Monet’s work, as he moved from painting his inner-city scenes of the Gare Saint-Lazare to the country village of Vétheuil on the banks of the Seine, about 65 kilometres north of Paris. In contrast, Harpignies had already spent significant periods painting various areas of rural France. In the early 1870s he was particularly attracted to the village of Hérisson (Allier) where he went to paint regularly until 1879. It was at this time that the artist bought ‘la Trémellerie’ in the village of Saint-Privé

⁸² THOMSON, R., 1998, p.8

⁸³ See MacMillan, J., “La France Profonde, Modernity and national identity”, in HOUSE, 1995, pp.52-55 for discussion on the term

(Yonne).⁸⁴ While he is more often associated with Hérisson in modern texts, it is in truth Saint-Privé which features most consistently as a village in Harpignies's paintings. Situated near the source of the Loing, over 150 kilometres to the south of the capital, Saint-Privé's location was quite distant to that of Vétheuil. Essentially, however, they were both founded upon the same characteristics. Both were small and rural, populated largely by peasants, and centred by the high apex of their church towers rising above their respective stretches of water.

This case study will consider the contributing factors which led to both Harpignies's habitual use of the village motif until his death in 1916 and Monet's experimentation with the same form of imagery over a more condensed period ending in 1881. By examining both the similarities and differences between their personal circumstances, aims and audiences, it will attempt to identify the reasons for this apparent convergence in their professedly opposing artistic values. Setting the artists first of all in the villages where they painted, the study will contemplate their treatment of the villages both as specific locations of personal significance and as a general motif. Considering then the development of their contrasting artistic ideologies, comparisons will be drawn in an effort to situate the artists' works within the wider evolution of landscape painting in France at that time. To conclude, the remainder of the study will analyse the distinct approach of each artist toward the contemporary Paris art market, essentially seeking to explain the differences in reception of what were in essence paintings of very similar subject matter.

⁸⁴ See BÉNÉDITE, 1917, pp.228-229; MIQUEL, 1975, III, p.761; and GOSSET & HARDY, 1970, p.4

The personal circumstances of the artists were quite different. Harpignies's career was flourishing. Already the son of a wealthy businessman from the north of France, he received a significant income from selling his paintings and teaching.⁸⁵ This allowed him to buy the large house named 'la Trémellerie' as a summer residence after being informed of its availability by a relative (see fig.28). Living as a bachelor with no apparent desire to establish a family, he appears to have become a respected member of his new community.⁸⁶ Harpignies's friend Léonce Bénédite, who wrote the most comprehensive biography of the artist in 1917 after the artist's death in 1916, described the artist's status in the village, 'Harpignies fut bientôt comme naturalisé à Saint-Privé; il en devint en quelque sorte le châtelain et, dans tous les cas, le bienfaiteur.'⁸⁷ By all accounts established and successful, Harpignies's move to Saint-Privé appears to have signified both a desire to find a place of *villégiature* for his own leisure, and also an ability to invest in a more permanent base in the countryside for the purposes of his work. Instead of making frequent excursions from Paris to the countryside and staying in temporary accommodation, he would now have been able to concentrate on his work from his own house, perhaps also enjoying the rustic serenity which he publicised in his paintings.

The circumstances in which Monet moved to Vétheuil were very different. Whereas Harpignies was able to settle in the countryside due to his financial security, Monet's relocation was rather a response to domestic and financial crisis. Monet's paintings were not selling well and much of his time was being spent looking after his wife, Camille, who was

⁸⁵ See GOSSET, 1982, p.9. Harpignies's father had a transit business in *le roulage accéléré* between Paris and Valenciennes before the establishment of the railways. The artist's two brothers also made a lucrative income refining sugar with Blanquet, Lelièvre et Cie.

⁸⁶ Harpignies considered it foolish to marry. In his journal he spoke of a young artist he knew, saying, 'celui-là avait du talent – ... il venait de faire la bêtise de se marier (ce qui l'a tué par parenthèse).' *Journal d'Harpignies*, p.35 (November, 1877), transcribed in MIQUEL, 1975, III, p.761.

⁸⁷ BÉNÉDITE, 1917, p.209

desperately ill. As well as the emotional burdens of this traumatic time, the extra expense of medical bills only added to the artist's anxiety. Monet's letters demonstrate the severity of his situation, each one requesting money or attempting to appease a creditor by offering paintings as repayment of debts.⁸⁸ The rural setting of Vétheuil not only offered a more pleasant environment for his wife, but let accommodation was also vastly cheaper than in the city.⁸⁹ Economising further, they shared their small road-side house with the family of the recently bankrupt businessman Ernest Hoschedé (see fig.29). They still struggled to pay the 600 francs rent, however, and Camille's condition progressively worsened.⁹⁰ Probably suffering from some form of cancer, she would eventually die in early September 1879 leaving Monet responsible for his two young children. Monet wrote to Camille's doctor, Dr. de Bellio, describing himself as 'absolument écoeuré et démoralisé' saying he was giving up all hope.⁹¹ Anne Distel has called 1878-79 Monet's 'année noire'.⁹²

As for most French artists, Paris was always the essential market base for both Monet and Harpignies, and in the interests of business it was important to maintain a presence in the city. Access was made simple for Harpignies after 1885 when a branch line was extended through Saint-Privé, which would have allowed him to get a connecting train to Paris at Gien.⁹³ During the winter, when Harpignies was not at Saint-Privé he lived at 14, rue de l'Abbaye in Paris where he was able to open a studio for twenty-five students.⁹⁴ Monet also kept a studio in the rue Vintimille where he could receive clients and show them his work. The considered importance of having these premises is demonstrated by his inability to pay the extra 700 francs annual rent, and the willingness of his wealthy friend Gustave

⁸⁸ e.g. WILDENSTEIN, 1979, letters 140-147

⁸⁹ e.g. See Thomson, R., in CLARKE & THOMSON, 2003, p.16. It is debatable whether Camille could have benefited, however, considering their cramped accommodation and the distance from their doctor in Paris.

⁹⁰ e.g. See Cowe, A., in CLARKE & THOMSON, 2003, p.168 (October 1879)

⁹¹ WILDENSTEIN, 1979, letter 155

⁹² DISTEL, 1989, p.109

⁹³ Information supplied by Prof. J.-P. Rocher, Saint-Privé. Use of the line ceased in 1952.

⁹⁴ See MIQUEL, 1975, III, p.764; and Gosset in GOSSET & HARDY, 1970, p.4

Caillebotte to pay it.⁹⁵ Notwithstanding the rather arduous train and coach journey, which the artist also had difficulty affording, his visits to the studio were frequent, particularly before exhibitions.⁹⁶ Although the two artists' starkly contrasting personal lives appear to have been based in the countryside, their own careers and the object of their work were focussed intently on Paris. To understand their interpretations of the village motif, therefore, it is important to define the perspective from which they perceived and portrayed their respective motifs. In terms of Cosgrove's dichotomy, for example, did the paintings expose the artists' own personal experiences and sentiments as 'participants', or did they simply reflect the generalised view of the Parisian 'observer'?

For both Harpignies and Monet, it is the composition and perspective from which the village is viewed which gives the imagery immediate effect. The paintings of Vétheuil and Saint-Privé are equally typified by the characteristic self-contained and distant view, set within rural surroundings. Monet's *Vétheuil en été*, 1879, and Harpignies's *Paysage*, 1884 (figs.30 and 31), for example, although different in style are very similar in the way they present the imagery. Both look towards the villages where they live from a point which seems removed from the details of each individual community. The villages themselves are defined largely by suggestion and would certainly seem to indicate a rather distanced approach – the glimpse of a bourgeois visitor rather than the recognition of a long-term inhabitant. For the Parisian audiences such images were not confrontational, but on the contrary could leave them at ease to consider their own associations with the iconography. The response of Duranty to Harpignies's *Petit village de Chasteloy (Allier)* (present whereabouts unknown) at the Salon of 1877 is an effective demonstration. 'C'est le petit village dont la France est semée de l'un bout à l'autre. La sensation en face de ce tableau est vive; il évoque une image qu'on portait

⁹⁵ See STUCKEY, 1995, pp.204-205; and Cowe, A., in CLARKE & THOMSON, 2003, p.167. Caillebotte's support appears to have lasted until April 1880 when Monet was able to continue the payments himself for another year.

⁹⁶ Monet apparently had to borrow money from the local postmistress for his train fare to Paris at the end of December 1879. See WILDENSTEIN, 1996, I, p.151

dans son cerveau. Quelques maisons seulement apparaissent, et la pensée trace toute seule le reste du village; ...⁹⁷ The question remains, however, whether the two artists' own relationships with their respective villages were reflected in the paintings, and whether they still assumed the role of Parisian outsiders.

In Harpignies's case, a perspective distant from the village is maintained in most of his paintings. *La mare à Hérissons* is the most intimate view of internal village life in Saint-Privé that I have been able to trace. Interestingly, some of his earlier paintings of Chasteloy and Hérisson from the Allier show far more involvement in each village, for example *Le village d'Hérisson au bord de l'Aumance; Bourbonnais*, 1872 (fig.32). Monet also began his experimentation with the village motif by painting internal views. *La route à Vétheuil, l'hiver*, 1879, (fig.33), for example, was painted in the winter after Monet's arrival in the village. It shows his house on the left of the road with that of his landlady towering above it. He appears to have gone through a systematic exploration of the area, showing the church, his house, Lavacourt (the hamlet on the opposite bank) and complete views of either settlement from a distance. In an artistic sense, this practice of beginning close up to the subject and then moving further away, would almost suggest an attempt at familiarisation so that the more distant views might be better informed as to the anatomy of the subject. From a practical point of view, he may simply have been experimenting with different perspectives. Subjectively, however, this distancing might also have indicated withdrawal. However, the relationship established between the viewpoint and the subject matter in each artist's paintings is very different.

In Monet's paintings of Vétheuil, for example, there is often a visual barrier between the village and the viewer such as a large expanse of water, as in *Vétheuil en été*; or bushes and trees, of which *Vétheuil*, 1880 (fig.34), is an extreme example. In contrast, Harpignies's

⁹⁷ DURANTY, 1877, pp.54-55

works consistently use the composition to invite the viewer into the painting towards the village. Rather than the river appearing as a visual obstacle, Harpignies often used it as a route into the picture, for instance in *Paysage* and *Le village au bord de la rivière*, 1882 (fig.35). In spite of the distant standpoint the viewer is drawn into the landscape as the eye traces the course of the meandering river to the village silhouetted on the horizon. Further effect was given to the composition through the artists' use of colour. In Monet's paintings, although Vétheuil creates a central focus for the viewer, the buildings are shown reflecting the light rather than drawing the viewer's eye in and using shadows to create receding space, as Harpignies did. Paintings such as *Saint-Privé – On the Outskirts of the Village*, 1886 (fig.36), place the side of the church tower which faces the viewer in shade, drawing the eye into the background of the sun-drenched landscape. In *La mare à Hérissons* the use of shade and reflection in the water is also highly divisive, creating a sharp line of symmetry down the composition and directing the perspective down the street, past the church and into the depths of the village.

It is perhaps the point of the church spire which is the most consistent compositional device in drawing attention to the villages themselves. Originally built to be seen from a distance it is perhaps not surprising that church towers became one of the most recognisable facets of the village motif in many artists' paintings. Monet and Harpignies's landscapes were no different. Bénédite considered it an innate feature: 'l'église, qui, naturellement, donne partout sa physionomie aux silhouettes des villages.'⁹⁸ It is the church which defines the structure of the community as well as that of the composition. The emphatic point of the church spire acts like the linchpin that fixes the community in place and around which the rest of the landscape revolves. Monet's views of Vétheuil, for example, rotate around the village with the church as a consistent reference point. In Harpignies's paintings too, the pointed spire is particularly emphatic, and the houses, the fields and the inhabitants all seem

⁹⁸ BÉNÉDITE, 1917, p.208

to fall under its auspices. *Landscape with a Ploughman and Village* (fig.37) is just one example.

As well as acting as a general indicator of the centre of a village community the church also served to mark its distinct location and identity. If considering not only physical distancing but social distancing as well, therefore, the artists' treatment of the church might indicate how they perceived their villages. The extent to which the artists countered the characteristics of the specific location with the typical village stereotype is highly significant in analysing their visual and psychological involvement with the subject. Monet's earlier paintings of Vétheuil, for example, seem distinctive in identifying the buildings, such as the church and the villa belonging to Monet's landlady. However, the majority of his later paintings show what could be any French riverside village. In *Vétheuil en été*, for instance, the buildings are represented by a mass of geometric shapes and the church is amalgamated into the form of the village as a whole rather than as a solitary symbol of the community's presence. In Harpignies's paintings, for example, he uses the church spire, arguably to a much greater extent than Monet, as the main distinguishing element. Bénédite remarked upon its shape, '... flanquée de ses quatre clochetons, avec sa flèche un peu ventrue sur le côté, le large toit baissé couvrant la nef, cette église qui profile sa silhouette rustique sur bien des aquarelles célèbres.'⁹⁹ It also appears in several of his oil paintings, asserting its presence with its dark pointed spire and marked as specific by the four pinnacles around its base. Similarly, his paintings of Chasteloy are defined by the shape of the church and its distinctive buttress against the slope – for instance in *Moonlight*, 1886 (fig.38). Of course Harpignies's Saint-Privé would also have appeared to many as the stereotypical French village; however, his insertion of specific details would have lent to the perceived authenticity of such places' existence.

⁹⁹ BÉNÉDITE, 1917, p.208

It seems that Harpignies was also intent on defining Saint-Privé as a place of Christian piety. The diligent peasant figures which feature in his paintings, in particular, give the church an active and moralistic role. *View of Saint-Privé*, 1887 (fig.39), is one example of several such paintings, with the figures appearing centrally, below the steeple and within the triangular composition it creates. He presents a moral ideal of a simple, united and Christian community. It is probable, however, that such imagery is more characteristic of a preconceived stereotype rather than the reality of Saint-Privé itself, although it is difficult to determine whether his preference for depicting rural piety was born from the artist's own beliefs or as a response to the demands of his audience. The writer Georges Lanoë recounted in 1883 that, ' Il ne s'est jamais occupé ni de politique ni de religion.'¹⁰⁰ Bénédite, however, made several religious references simply in relation to the artist's portrayal of nature.

Il célèbre avec bonhomie et simplicité et avec cette religiosité paisible que rien ne vient troubler l'oeuvre du Créateur et la gloire de la création. Il peint avec la conscience tranquille et enthousiaste d'un fidèle qui accomplit un acte d'adoration. Il marche en pleine certitude, comme un croyant que rien ne détourne de sa foi.¹⁰¹

With regard to Monet, while the church was a frequent and focal feature of his paintings of Vétheuil, he appears to have been essentially indifferent as to its religious function. In discussing Monet's few paintings of churches from before 1878, Richard Kendall suggests that the artist was overtly anticlerical in the way he painted them.¹⁰² In respect of the Vétheuil landscapes, however, such a reading would contradict the otherwise rather tranquil nature of the works (not to mention the fervent religious principles of his cohabitant and future wife Alice Hoschedé). Monet's initial paintings of Vétheuil imply an admiration and interest in the church's structure, for example in *L'Eglise de Vétheuil*, 1878 (fig.40), which

¹⁰⁰ LANOË, 1905, p124

¹⁰¹ BÉNÉDITE, 1917, p234 ; see also transcription from Harpignies, in MIQUEL, 1975, III, p.765 (23 December 1886)

¹⁰² Kendall, R., "Monet, Atheism, and the 'Antagonistic Forces' of his Age" in FOWLE, 2006, publication pending

shows a detailed upward-looking view of the church's façade. In the more distant views, its significance certainly seems to lie more in its pictorial function than in conveying any positive or negative religious symbolism. Perhaps more significantly, far from being provocative, Monet was recognising and conforming to the general image of the village motif.

From a more subjective perspective, the church in Harpignies's paintings could also have been an indicator of his home. An old postcard illustrates the proximity of the church to his house, perhaps giving an added significance to its prominence in his paintings (fig.41). It is unlikely that many viewers would have been familiar enough with the artist to recognise this fact, however, and this personal link is certainly not a factor betrayed by the paintings. Similarly, one of his few paintings of his own garden offers little suggestion as to the proximity of the surrounding village (fig.42). The extent to which Monet depicts Vétheuil as his home is also limited. Whereas in early paintings such as *La route à Vétheuil, l'hiver* his house was depicted as part of the village, in later paintings his home and family were treated quite separately from the rest of the community, as in *Le jardin de Monet à Vétheuil*, 1881 (fig.43). His views of Vétheuil become unfamiliar and objective, placing the viewer and artist in isolation from the community; arguably portraying Monet as an 'observer' far more than a 'participant'. In contrast, although Harpignies's paintings appear to evade personal familiarity they involved the viewer in the scene, drawing them in through his composition and projecting a type of rural lifestyle for them to contemplate.

It is often difficult to distinguish the perspective intended for the viewer from the artist's subjective viewpoint. It is certainly possible, however, to correlate aspects of the paintings with elements of their individual circumstances in attempting to establish the reasons behind their specific treatment of the iconography. The perspectives conveyed in Monet and Harpignies's paintings of their villages, for example, could be interpreted as reflecting their

own status within their communities. It is clear that Harpignies was not alienating himself from the village in the same way as Monet, despite the distance of his views. The former's importance in Saint-Privé is demonstrated by the fact that it is his likeness which represents Saint Henri of Germany in one of the village church's stained glass windows.¹⁰³ As the 'châtelain' or 'bienfaiteur', however, he must have maintained some degree of social distance, or at least superiority over the Saint-Privé villagers. This was no doubt reinforced by his role as a successful and educated member of the Parisian bourgeoisie. Monet's status within the Vétheuil community was not as advantageous. Far from being a 'bienfaiteur', Monet appears to have been the subject of patronage from the village's own *petit bourgeoisie*, such as the 'idiot' Paul Cocqueret, the owner of a nearby compass factory, who Monet later referred to as 'stupid'.¹⁰⁴ Thomson suggests his commissions were a charitable effort as Coqueret was a member of the local Bureau de Bienfaisance.¹⁰⁵ One could assume a hint of bitterness on Monet's part regarding his circumstances; his status within Vétheuil was not nearly as comfortable as his contemporary's in Saint-Privé. This may therefore have prevented Monet from drawing the same rather condescending conclusions as Harpignies appears to have done in relation to the inhabitants of his rural community.

The British critic E.G. Halton wrote, 'The human figure is seldom found in the landscapes of Harpignies. Placid tranquillity appealed to him and he seemed to prefer to commune with Nature in solitude and to omit any human element which might disturb the impressive serenity of the scene.'¹⁰⁶ They were certainly not omitted entirely, however, and in comparison to Monet's works seem relatively frequent, particularly in his village paintings. As was common practice, Harpignies often used figures as a device to unify both composition and narrative. In *Saint-Privé – On the Outskirts of the Village* and *Temps de*

¹⁰³ Information supplied by J.-P. Rocher, Saint-Privé

¹⁰⁴ WILDENSTEIN, 1979, letter 321 to Alice Hoschedé

¹⁰⁵ Thomson in CLARKE & THOMSON, 2003, pp.24-25

¹⁰⁶ HALTON, 1918, p.44

soleil à Saint-Privé, 1886 (fig.44), for example, the viewer can assume that the peasants live in the village on the horizon as they follow the road towards it, looking in that direction. They are precisely the stereotypical picturesque peasant-folk that Monet omitted from his motif. Generic and inactive, they imply rather than depict activity. In both artists' paintings the representation of agriculture is minimal, despite it being the main occupation of both villages' inhabitants.¹⁰⁷ With regard to the landscape itself, therefore, Halton's assertion as to the serenity of Harpignies's paintings and the lack of human interference still rings true.¹⁰⁸ Rather than stretches of cultivated fields, the viewer is struck by the green-ness of his paintings, filled with foliage and grassy planes. *Landscape with a Ploughman and Village* appears to be a rare exception.

Monet's apparent lack of involvement in the community is evident in the increasing absence of social or functional activity in his imagery. Despite the implication of human presence by the group of buildings that forms Vétheuil, there is very little else to confirm it. The early Vétheuil paintings are active with figures near the foreground, whereas at the other extreme some of his paintings of the *débâcle* seem to relish the sense of desolation, for example in *La débâcle*, 1880 (fig.45).¹⁰⁹ Even when Monet painted fields in summer, they were usually shown lying fallow. *Champ de coquelicots près de Vétheuil*, 1879 (fig.46), for example, shows the land covered in poppies as a setting for his family's leisure. Where he did paint cultivated fields, for instance in *Champ de blé*, 1881 (fig.47), there is no allusion to the wheat or the adjacent lucerne as functional crops, or to their impending harvest. In contrast to Harpignies's works, those figures that feature in Monet's later paintings of Vétheuil are mostly modern and bourgeois. Usually his own family, they remain separate from the

¹⁰⁷ For statistics regarding the occupations of the communes' respective inhabitants in the nineteenth century see BURTON, 1900; and the response of the school teacher of Saint-Privé's to a questionnaire sent by the Société centrale d'agriculture et de viticulture de l'Yonne on the occasion of the Exposition Universelle in 1900, published in ROCHER, 1978, pp.100-104.

¹⁰⁸ See HALTON, 1918, p.44

¹⁰⁹ See also WILDENSTEIN, 1996, cat.nos.562-572.

village. Examples such as *Vétheuil* (fig.34) and *Femme assise sous les saules*, 1880 (fig.48) tend to reinforce the concept of Monet as the Parisian ‘observer’ as well as raising the issue of his own personal relationship with the village and its community.

Considering the upheaval Monet was experiencing in his personal life at this time, the idea that it may have influenced his work is the subject of much debate. The practicalities of his domestic situation, for example, may well have been a factor in his apparent quest for peace and isolation, perhaps avoiding the distractions of his overcrowded household. Seen chronologically, it is also possible to associate Monet’s retreat from the village with the event of his wife’s death. Since then a spate of rumours had arisen regarding the Monets and Hoschedés’ rather unorthodox living arrangements, which may have been one reason to avoid the village. With Ernest Hoschedé working in Paris for a large proportion of the time it was alleged that Monet and Mme. Hoschedé’s relationship exceeded that of mere friends.¹¹⁰ The journalist Émile Taboureux confirmed Monet’s antisocial attitude in his article for *La Vie Moderne*, which would coincide with the artist’s solo exhibition in the magazine’s headquarters in June of the same year. He described his arrival by river at Monet’s house in Vétheuil, saying, ‘...he didn’t exactly throw his arms around my neck. Monet is wary in the extreme; no doubt he’s been fooled on more than one occasion.’¹¹¹

It is perhaps unsurprisingly the emotional implications of Monet’s works which has been most discussed, however. Robert Herbert, for instance, suggests that the changes in Monet’s work during this period were in part a response to the emotional events in his life, explaining, ‘Forsaking Paris and its suburbs can be seen as a search for the tranquillity of

¹¹⁰ See Anon., “Tout Paris: Impressions of an Impressionist”, *Le Gaulois*, 24 January 1880, translated in STUCKEY, 1985, pp.69-70; Adhémar, H. in REWALD & WEITZENHOFFER (eds.) 1984, p.65-64; and Stuckey, C, and McNamara, C., in DIXON et al, 1998, pp.43-44 and 70-71 respectively

¹¹¹ Taboureux, É., “Claude Monet”, *La Vie Moderne*, 12 June 1880, translated in STUCKEY, 1985, p.89

unspoiled village and rural subjects ...'.¹¹² More specifically, paintings such as *Femme assise sous les saules* seem to make particularly nostalgic references to paintings like *Au bord de l'eau, Bennecourt*, 1868 (fig.49) which shows Camille in the early days of the couple's relationship. Where there are no familiar figures, however, the moods conveyed by his multifarious depictions of nature are more ambiguous. The implications of his dramatic *débâcle* scenes are particularly contentious.¹¹³ Painted in the winter of 1879-1880, these depictions of blocks of ice floating down the Seine were the first landscapes to be painted after Camille's death. Recently emphasis has fallen on the artist's critical financial predicament and his need to make money. Thomson, for example, argues that Monet was following the example of other Salon artists and 'capitalising on the recent natural phenomenon'.¹¹⁴ The variety of weather-types in his Vétheuil paintings could simply reflect the necessity of the impoverished *plein-air* artist to paint all year round. Earlier writers have interpreted these paintings as full of emotional significance, however.¹¹⁵ Others claim it was his fascination in this extraordinary natural event which impelled him to begin painting again.¹¹⁶

The primacy of nature and objectivity regarding subject matter were accepted principles of Impressionist painting.¹¹⁷ A supplement to the *Dictionnaire de la langue française* from 1877 uses a citation by E. Bergerat in defining Impressionism, describing it as accepting 'only the free arrangements of nature.'¹¹⁸ The idea of capturing the 'impression' of the moment implicitly precluded preconceived emotions and ideas from the creative process. It

¹¹² Herbert, R., "Industry in the Changing Landscape from Daubigny to Monet" in HERBERT, 2002, pp.1-21 at 19

¹¹³ WILDENSTEIN, 1996, cat.nos.552-574

¹¹⁴ Thomson in CLARKE & THOMSON, 2003, p.24, and cites Rapetti, R., "Débâcles", in Treviso 2001-2, pp.71-72; and see also McNamara in DIXON et al, 1998, p.77-78.

¹¹⁵ e.g. see Cooper, D., in COOPER & RICHARDSON, 1957, p.50

¹¹⁶ See HOUSE, 1986, p.20

¹¹⁷ See HOUSE, 1986, p.45

¹¹⁸ Littré, E., *Dictionnaire de la langue française (Supplément)*, Paris, 1877, p.196, cited in HOUSE, 1986, p.45

is true, however, that contemporary critics found emotion in Monet's paintings from Vétheuil. Joris-Karl Huysmans, for example, described Monet's ice-flow painting *Les glaçons*, in the 7th Impressionist exhibition, as 'intensely melancholy'.¹¹⁹ Yet this is perhaps more indicative of a general tendency in nineteenth-century art criticism to search for a poetic or emotional dimension in landscape paintings, not necessarily linked to any external influence. Armand Silvestre, for example, referred to Monet as 'un des vrais poètes contemporains des choses de la nature.'¹²⁰

The perceived association between nature, emotion and poetry was perhaps demanded more expressly from Harpignies's paintings, however. Particularly as his works appeared to conform to more conventional definitions of 'naturalism', poeticism was a standard requirement, despite the uncertainty regarding what it should consist of. The artist's rather reserved and impersonal approach is evident in some of the reviews. An anonymous article on *Les artistes valenciennois au Salon* in 1882, for example, stated, 'Le talent de M. Harpignies est sérieux, imposant, plutôt que séduisant.'¹²¹ In spite of such qualities, however, he was always perceived as distinct from those who painted 'photographs', and more emphatic interpretations of the emotive facets of his works were not uncommon.¹²² Bénédite described the artist as a natural optimist and stated 'Son oeuvre n'évoque pas le mystère. Il n'a aucune tristesse, rarement même de la mélancolie.'¹²³ Halton also wrote that these paintings were 'veritable poems in colour, which in their restful serenity and repose, arouse the emotions... the placid joy he found in nature.'¹²⁴ Such aspects fit well with the peaceful

¹¹⁹ Huysmans, J.-K., "The Exhibition of the Independants of 1881", *L'Art Moderne*, Paris, 1883. Excerpt translated in STUCKEY, 1985, p.94

¹²⁰ Silvestre, A., "Le Monde des arts: Expositions particulières : Septième exposition des artistes indépendants", *La Vie Moderne*, 11 March 1882, pp.150-151, transcribed in BERSON, 1996, pp.413-414 at 413

¹²¹ Transcribed in MIQUEL, 1975, III, p.762

¹²² e.g. See HAVARD, 1885, pp.49-50

¹²³ BÉNÉDITE, 1917, pp.208 and 234; and see also LAFENESTRE, 1873, p.56, who refers to Harpignies as 'un homme profondément ému par la nature,'

¹²⁴ HALTON, 1918, p.43

and contented prosperity which the artist appears to have found in Saint-Privé. His own experience of the place may well have encouraged him to paint it as he did – tranquil, lush and sunlit, summer landscapes.

The peaceful harmony produced by the different elements of Harpignies's paintings also appears to have satisfied the critics' demands for poeticism among Salon landscapes, and in turn seems to have been a facet of Harpignies's continuing commercial success. It is clear that his emphatic placement of the village in many of his works was a highly significant aspect of this. Rather than being distinct from nature it helped define it. Bénédite, for example, described Harpignies's paintings : '...cette nature modérée, ordonnée, aux harmonies sobres, aux lignes élégantes aux formes souvent nobles, amples et puissantes.'¹²⁵

The role of the village in both artists' paintings is instrumental in depicting *la France profonde* as inherently civilised and picturesque. In composition and narrative the village casts a sense of order and containment over the landscape. In paintings such as Monet's *Vétheuil*, 1879 (fig.50), it almost appears to grow from the land itself rather than being imposed upon it; emerging against the contours of the hill and bending around the river. In both artists paintings rural France appears to culminate in the unified and structured community which crowns the landscape in each painting.

What it seems Harpignies promoted in his paintings was not so much a statement of his own personal response but a translation of his own rural contentment into the more widely understood visual imagery of the time. It is as if he was bending the reality to fit the myth and presenting Saint-Privé as a true example of bourgeois preconceptions. His manner of depicting his verdant rural surroundings, summer weather, unassuming peasants and prominent village church, was suggestive of a formerly established ideal based on the benefits of a rural way of life. While the components of Monet's village motif in themselves

¹²⁵ BÉNÉDITE, 1917, p.210

were very similar, his treatment of it emerges quite differently. For him the village grew to be non-specific; a form which confirmed the civilised nature of the rural setting and distinguished it from the city. Although the same presumptions would have surrounded the type of rural existence there was no emphasis on its attributes. Whereas Harpignies invited the viewer into the scene to contemplate the rural lifestyle, Monet used a less explicit motif, bathing the iconography in nature and light to give a sense of bourgeois escapism which was far less didactic than Harpignies's detailed naturalism.

The 'chain of genius'

In addition to the more subjective and personal elements behind Monet and Harpignies's works, it is also important to consider other external influences which may have affected their landscape paintings and in particular their treatment of the village motif through style and technique. Whereas in the countryside their lives were very different, the artistic environment that they were responding to in Paris was ultimately the same. They would have been exposed to the same exhibitions, artists and debates; and would have had a number of critics, influences and sometimes buyers in common.¹²⁶ Although not close acquaintances, they were certainly aware of each other's work and the occasional encounter would have been inevitable amid the social circles of landscape artists. Monet's letters from Antibes in 1888, for instance, speak of 'le père Harpignies' and his pupils, who were staying in the same hotel.¹²⁷ Their artistic values nonetheless grew to be deeply conflicting. This section will therefore examine the artists' stance in relation to the strong currents of stylistic development which occurred in landscape painting in nineteenth-century France.

¹²⁶ e.g. The Champenois collector Henry Vasnier was particularly keen on landscapes and bought paintings by both Harpignies and Monet. His collection was bequeathed to the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Reims. See LIOT, 2002

¹²⁷ e.g. See WILDENSTEIN, 1979, III, letters 806, 807, 810, 816, 819, 820 and 824

Considering the extent to which the divergence in their attitudes is evident in their paintings, it will also draw attention to instances where aspects of their work appear to coincide.

Monet and Harpignies's artistic principles were representative of opposing extremes in the main schools of thought regarding stylistic ideals during this period. The latter once wrote, 'Il faut beaucoup dessiner; cela est indispensable. En ce moment on est porté à négliger par trop le dessin... On voit tout dans le flou et indécis. – Bref, on fait de l'escamotage.'¹²⁸

Without doubt he was referring to the influence of Impressionism and he was not the only one to recognise the vague and unrefined qualities of their technique. Their works, including Monet's, were frequently perceived as unfinished and were often referred to as *ébauches*.¹²⁹

They were criticised especially by more conservative commentators. In his review of the 7th Impressionist exhibition in 1882 the critic Henry Havard complained that a long corridor was needed to contemplate Monet's paintings, saying, 'La nature n'a pas besoin qu'on se recule de dix pas pour apprécier ses accents.'¹³⁰ Meanwhile the extremely right-wing Édouard Drumont wrote approvingly of Harpignies, describing him as, 'Un peintre vigoureux et souple, puissant et sincère, qui joint la poésie du style à l'interprétation la plus nette et la plus accentuée de la vraie nature.'¹³¹

Advocates of Harpignies's paintings, such as Bénédite, admired his 'puissance d'expression toujours imposante, parfois magnifique.'¹³² Others, however, criticised the artist's approach as heavy-handed.¹³³ Armand Dayot used almost exactly the same language to describe his Salon paintings in 1884 and 1890.

¹²⁸ Cited in LANOË, 1905, p.125

¹²⁹ e.g. Biez, J., "Les Petits Salons: Les Indépendants", *Paris*, 8 March 1882, transcribed in BERSON, 1996, p.380

¹³⁰ Havard, H., "Exposition des artistes indépendants", *Le Siècle*, 2 March 1882, transcribed in BERSON, 1996, p.391

¹³¹ Cited in De BÉLINA, 1883, p.387

¹³² BÉNÉDITE, 1917, p.228

¹³³ e.g. VÉRON, 1878, p.246

La manière sèche [d'Harpignies] paraît encore s'accroître davantage. Ses arbres, découpés à l'emporte pièce, se détachent avec violence sur des fonds éclairés par un soleil sans chaleur. Pas une brise ne circule dans ses paysages.

Quelques nuages aux lourdeurs de pierre, plaqués dans l'azur glacé du ciel, font tache sur la monotonie du sol, sans apporter pour cela aucun mouvement à cette nature mortellement triste dans sa lumineuse impassibilité. On dirait que la vie s'est subitement figée dans ces mornes paysages, et que les eaux sans murmures, les arbres sans frissons, les nuages sans mobilité, attendent avec angoisse l'arrivée du souffle divin qui doit les animer.¹³⁴

What the Impressionists lacked in solidity of form and 'poetic truth', they made up for in their spontaneity and 'truth' of natural effect by concentrating on colour and light rather than the details of the subject itself. More open minded critics such as Duranty appreciated the benefits of this approach, saying that the 'thought, intention and drawing of the painter are often expressed with more rapidity and concentration.'¹³⁵

Henri Frantz, in an article for *The Studio* in 1909, wrote, 'Harpignies was ever an enemy of the Impressionist method, his objection being that its disciples worked by a process of patches, neglecting the "envelope", the blending of tones.'¹³⁶ It is clear that by 'envelope' Frantz was referring to the depiction of form on the canvas. However for Eugène Boudin, Monet's early mentor and a forerunner to the Impressionists, it meant something different – the momentary light and atmosphere that affected the view of the object in reality. He is cited as once stating, 'C'est moins ce monde que l'élément qui l'enveloppe que nous reproduisons.'¹³⁷ These different concepts of what it was they were actually painting is perhaps most evident in their use of colour. Harpignies's, for instance, revolved around specific tonal harmonies and were applied relatively smoothly to reinforce the concept of a tangible object. Monet, on the contrary, was attempting to convey the transience of the light passing over his subject matter by juxtaposing brisk flashes of contrasting hues.

¹³⁴ DAYOT, 1890, p.46, see also DAYOT, 1884, pp.78-79

¹³⁵ Duranty, E., *La nouvelle peinture*, Paris, 1876, cited in HOUSE, 1986, p.159

¹³⁶ FRANTZ, 1909, p.264

¹³⁷ Boudin, letter to F. Martin, 28 August 1867, transcribed in AUBRY, 1987, p.65

The objective of both artists, however, was to encapsulate as faithfully as possible what their subject represented to them. In Harpignies's paintings we see the village portrayed with solid permanence. Coupled with his iconography it represents an idealistic image of traditional continuity, bathed in the optimism of the bright summer sunshine. Although in the paintings of Vétheuil the components of the village iconography seem similarly timeless, Monet's technique of defining his subject by the light reflecting off it detracts from any sense of durability. *Vétheuil dans le brouillard*, 1879 (fig.51), for example, represents the opposite of what Harpignies set out to achieve in his paintings of Saint-Privé. The lack of detail and distinct outlines suggests a transient image which refers not only to the visual effects of light and the changing seasons, but also permeates to the substance and symbolic status of the village in its traditional form. Just as his depiction of the momentary image alluded to the ephemeral character of nature, so it might also transpose to the contextual fragility of rural communities.

The difference in the two artists' techniques may well have been due to age and training. Twenty-one years Monet's senior, Harpignies was born into a different generation of landscape artists. Perhaps more than some, he had retained many of the older artistic values. At the 1879 Salon Arthur Baignères branded him among the conservatives in the 'Sénat du paysage'.¹³⁸ In his younger years he was a pupil of Alexis Achard and then a devoted follower of Corot. Although Harpignies was often referred to as one of the *École de 1830* himself, he also had a strong affinity with the neo-classical Italianate scenes of the *paysage historique*. Harpignies had spent much time in Italy during the 1850s and 60s, and as late as 1878 exhibited a *Vue du Colisée* (fig.52) in the Salon, of which Mantz said, 'l'exécution

¹³⁸ Baignères, 1879, p.48. The other artists he included in this *Sénat* were Busson, Segé, Lavieille, Hanoteau, and Defaux.

remonte évidemment à une date ancienne.¹³⁹ The influence is perhaps less evident in his paintings of the countryside surrounding Hérisson and Saint-Privé, although it still plays a subtle role in the ‘poeticism’ of his landscapes.

Harpignies’s emphatic commitment to line and form, acts as a strong indicator of his stylistic allegiances. Anatole France referred to him as, ‘le Michel Ange des arbres’¹⁴⁰ because of his seemingly anatomical precision in depicting their structure. Harpignies was particularly fond of painting oaks and they often frame his highly structured compositions. The neo-classical influence is marked in his Salon painting of 1875, *Les chênes de Château-Renard (Allier)* (fig.53). According to Halton, ‘[Harpignies] did not hesitate to alter and adjust in order to preserve the effect of balance and unity of his pictures.’¹⁴¹ This claim is supported by Véron’s review of Harpignies’s work in the Salon of 1885: ‘Les réalistes eux-mêmes ne se refusent pas toujours le droit de choisir et de corriger les éléments de leurs paysages...’¹⁴² Lanoë defined the difference between Harpignies and Monet’s paintings quite succinctly, ‘Si les tableaux impressionnistes à la Monet ne sont, le plus souvent, que des aquarelles agrandies, les aquarelles de M. Harpignies ne sont au contraire, que des tableaux trop petits – fort bien composés, il est vrai – mais qui gagneraient à être peints à l’huile.’¹⁴³ Whereas Harpignies applied his strictness of composition and form to even his smallest works, Monet’s momentary glimpses of the French countryside were painted in a way which was so free and spontaneous that to present them on canvas was perceived by many as an affront to the diligence of previous generations of artists. Harpignies appears to have been particularly disconcerted; writing to a friend at the time of the Salon in 1880 he complained, ‘Les bonnes

¹³⁹ MANTZ, 1878

¹⁴⁰ France, A., 1900, cited by Hardy in GOSSET & HARDY, 1970, p.6

¹⁴¹ HALTON, 1918, p.44

¹⁴² VÉRON, 1885, p.222

¹⁴³ LANOË, 1905, p.125

traditions s'en vont; on ne travaille plus. On veut arriver tout de suite. C'est pour cela que l'on met à la mode le paysage facile, sans arbre, et sans caractère. Foutue époque!' ¹⁴⁴

Where their artistic theory was concerned, the two artists' principles neatly contradicted each other, like the two extremes of a spectrum. It is evident that the limits between the artists' stylistic approaches were often blurred, however, both in the eyes of critics and in practice, particularly during the time when Monet was painting in Vétheuil. Claretie, for example, grouped Harpignies with those he considered had, 'purement et simplement saisi les coins de paysage qu'ils se sont attachés à peindre.' ¹⁴⁵ Clearly he was citing an ideal which had more recently been formulated by Impressionism. Conversely, the spontaneity with which Monet 'seized' a view is debatable. The inclusion of the church tower as a marker of continuity in paintings such as the *La prairie*, 1880 (fig.54), for example, seems far from coincidental. The neat triangular symmetry of *L'Église de Vétheuil* also seems carefully composed. Considering the detailing of the church's façade and general architecture, comparisons might even be drawn with the precepts of the *Voyages pittoresques*, demonstrated in Louis Villeneuve's lithograph from 1819 (fig.55). If Monet did not arrange his composition, he certainly chose particularly strategic points from which to paint. ¹⁴⁶

Concerns regarding Monet's deviation from the principles of Impressionism were voiced by his colleagues... very publicly. An extremely cutting anonymous article published in *Le Gaulois* newspaper made a mock funeral announcement informing readers of the grievous loss of Claude Monet to the Impressionist school – it was to take place in the Salon galleries at the Palais de l'Industrie. ¹⁴⁷ At the 7th Impressionist exhibition in 1882 critics even spoke of

¹⁴⁴ Transcribed in MIQUEL, 1975, III, p.762

¹⁴⁵ CLARETIE, 1876, p.181

¹⁴⁶ See McNamara in DIXON et al, 1998, pp.67-68; and for general discussion of Monet's use of composition and viewpoint see HOUSE, 1986, pp.45-61

¹⁴⁷ Anon., "Tout Paris: Impressions of an Impressionist", *Le Gaulois*, 24 January 1880, translated in STUCKEY, 1985, pp.69-70

the ‘death of Impressionism’ altogether. A. Hustin wrote, for example, ‘L’impressionnisme se meurt. Voilà ce qu’on répète après avoir jeté un rapide coup d’oeil sur la septième exposition des artistes indépendants...’¹⁴⁸ Changes are certainly apparent in considering Monet’s stylistic tendencies. The painting that was accepted into the Salon, *Lavacourt*, 1880 (fig.56), demonstrates some of the stylistic concessions Monet was prepared to make. He admitted in a letter to his friend Théodore Duret in March 1880 that he had made it ‘plus sage, plus bourgeoise’.¹⁴⁹ In comparing it to some of his other paintings one can appreciate immediately the tightening of his brushwork, the more ‘finished’ effect and the increased permanence of the imagery.

Similarly, it could also be said that Harpignies’s later paintings show concessions towards Impressionist ideals, for example in the loosening of compositions and brushwork. Comparing, for instance, *Temps de soleil à Saint-Privé* from 1886, with his *Oaks of Château-Renard* painted eleven years previously, a significant lightening of palette is also evident. He also experimented with painting *en plein air*. Although most of his pictures were probably worked up from studies in his studio, he admitted to painting his 1883 Salon entry, *Le bois de la Trémellerie à Saint-Privé (Yonne)*, entirely out of doors. He explained its elevated price in writing to a M. Prelet: ‘c’est une étude faite entièrement d’après nature et à laquelle j’attache beaucoup de prix à cause des difficultés très grandes que j’ai rencontrées en la faisant.’¹⁵⁰

The possibility of the artists’ deliberate manipulation of such aspects will be examined below. However, the stylistic coincidences in the two artists’ works may well have been due to the more general influences and ideas which permeated most French landscape painting

¹⁴⁸ Hustin, A., “L’Exposition des impressionnistes”, *Moniteur des arts*, 10 March 1882, transcribed in BERSON, 1996, p.395

¹⁴⁹ WILDENSTEIN, 1979, letter 173.

¹⁵⁰ Harpignies, letter to Prelet, 14 December 1883, transcribed in MIQUEL, 1975, III, p.764

during this period. One aspect that they had in common was that much of their inspiration sprang from the same artists. An example might be the Dutch landscapist Johan Barthold Jongkind, who was a mutual acquaintance of Monet and Harpignies.¹⁵¹ However, considering the growing dominance of the École de 1830 over French landscape painting during the nineteenth century, it is perhaps unsurprising that it was these artists which presented the most evident influence in both Monet and Harpignies's paintings. Grouping Harpignies with the École de 1830, Frantz protested in 1909 over the public's preoccupation with the Impressionists and added, 'Is there not room in our admiration for the two Schools, which, however dissimilar in appearance, are in reality so nearly akin that they constitute an unbroken chain of genius?'¹⁵² Certainly, their artwork grew from very similar roots.

Harpignies, born in 1819 and only two years younger than Daubigny, was often referred to as the last remaining member of the group.¹⁵³ Comparisons are sometimes made with Daubigny's work, for example in the Weston Gallery's exhibition in 1987 of etchings by the two artists.¹⁵⁴ And similarities can be discerned between paintings such as Daubigny's *Hamlet on the Seine Near Vernon*, 1872 (fig.57), and Harpignies's *Paysage*, or *Village au bord de la rivière*. Equally, his passion for painting oak trees is reminiscent of works by Rousseau. Nevertheless, Harpignies had never met Rousseau, nor Millet, nor Dupré, and had never visited Barbizon. Paul Gosset wrote 'il ne cessera jamais de se réclamer de Rome "et non de Barbizon"'.¹⁵⁵ In many ways, however, it was precisely his interest in Rome which marked his devoted allegiance to the work of Corot. Harpignies once wrote,

¹⁵¹ See Mongan, A., "Henri-Joseph Harpignies", in WILMERDING, 1986, p.229; and SPATE, 2001, p.23

¹⁵² FRANTZ, 1909, p.257

¹⁵³ e.g. HALTON, 1918, p.43; OLLENDORF, 1887, p.78; and Mongan in WILMERDING, 1986, p.229

¹⁵⁴ WILLIAM WESTON GALLERY, 1987

¹⁵⁵ BÉNÉDITE, 1917, p.210

J'aimais la forme; elle existe [en Italie] par excellence. C'est là que je l'ai bien comprise, elle a été mon guide pendant toute ma carrière. Si le père Corot pouvait me lire, il serait bien content, lui toujours italien, lui le plus grand paysagiste des temps modernes.¹⁵⁶

Particularly in comparison to some of Corot's earlier paintings, such as *Lormes, l'église*, from 1842 (fig.58), the resemblance in the sharpness of form and use of colour is marked. Also in respect of Corot's later works, it is clear that Harpignes has attempted to emulate the lightness of his brushstrokes in painting foliage; although it seems that in Dayot's opinion he did not succeed.

The members of the École de 1830 had evidently established many of the standards regarding late nineteenth-century formal landscape painting. Somewhat paradoxically, however, they had also set an example to more radical artists and introduced new ideas and techniques to be explored. They had, for example, encouraged the idea of painting *en plein air* and depicting nature as it would be seen in real life. In reference to Corot's Salon painting from 1870, *Ville d'Avray* (fig.59), Alfred de Lostalot spoke of appreciating the 'charme de l'impression première'.¹⁵⁷ Written before 'impression' became such a loaded term, his review unconsciously predicted what came to be perceived as the Impressionist ideology quite accurately. The links were heralded by many, despite attempts by critics such as De Montaiglon to refute them. In his review of the Salon of 1875 he dismissed the new style saying,

... Corot ne peignait pas dans sa façon habituelle parce qu'elle était plus prompte et plus facile; s'il a préféré cette manière, c'est par un choix raisonné, parce qu'elle lui paraissait mieux exprimer l'idéal qu'il avait conçu de certains effets de la nature.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ Cited in BÉNÉDITE, 1917, p.219

¹⁵⁷ De LOSTALOT, 1870, p.335

¹⁵⁸ De MONTAIGLON, 1875, p.22

Corot's influence is evident in Monet's paintings of Vétheuil. In comparing *Les saules*, 1880 (fig.60), with Corot's *Ville-d'Avray*, for instance, strong parallels appear in subject matter, composition and technique. The Vétheuil paintings also hold qualities comparable to works by other members of the École de 1830.¹⁵⁹ Perhaps more so than Corot, Daubigny's influence is particularly apparent, especially in the images depicting the river. *Sur les bords de la Seine*, 1851 (fig.61), for instance holds many similarities to Monet's *L'Entrée du petit bras à Vétheuil*, 1880 (fig.62). Monet even had a studio boat like Daubigny, so that he could paint from the middle of the water. In their artistic ideals too, Daubigny's works were perhaps the most significant with respect to modern landscape's break with the principles of Neo-Classicism. Considering the recentness of Daubigny's death, as well as the attention the École de 1830 was receiving in Paris at the time of Monet's departure, it is likely that many elements of their art would have been particularly current in his mind, especially as he was painting very similar subject matter.

Although Harpignies's paintings appear to have been more retrospective and conservative, and Monet's more radical and forward-thinking, it can be said of both that much of their work alluded to previously established ideals. However, by reiterating them and emphasising particular aspects within their own interpretation of the rural landscape, they had developed quite contradicting values. As an example the artists' paintings of their gardens seem to encapsulate not only the differences in their techniques, but also the type of landscapes they valued. Harpignies's, with its neo-classical urns and steps, seems neat and formally composed. In contrast, Monet's garden appears untamed, exuding colour and life, and decorated with fashionably modern japanese-style pots. Through their different convictions, however, as well as producing works which were distinct in appearance, they were placing themselves in very specific roles within the Paris art market.

¹⁵⁹ Clarke, M., makes a detailed analysis of the École de 1830's influence on Monet's painting at this time in CLARKE & THOMSON, 2003, pp.37-49.

Markets and manipulation

When Monet and Harpignies began to paint their respective villages in the 1870s, the market for landscape paintings was well established and the work of the École de 1830 held primacy. Coupled with the post-war taste for images of *la France profonde* the two artists were competing before an audience habituated to quite specific expectations. With the death of the most prominent members of the École, however, the sense of reverence regarding their work was also countered by an uncertainty as to how the established artistic traditions should develop, and which artists should be the exemplars of the future. As well as the obvious marketing incentives to emulate the established school, there was also scope for asserting a new set of ideals. Although Monet's and Harpignies's responses to this remit were similar in subject matter, in most other aspects they differed. It is important, therefore, to consider the significance of the village motif in respect of each artist's distinct approach to the artistic forums, and the reception of their work by various factions of the Parisian audience.

In respect of Harpignies's paintings, his development of the village motif certainly appears to have occurred during the post-war period, a significant change from his previous work. Having launched himself into an artistic career comparatively late in life (in his thirties), he had spent much of the 1850s painting in Italy and travelling the French countryside. For most of the 1860s he had been painting Roman landscapes and had then worked on a decorative panel for Garnier's Paris opera house. After the war, however, he committed himself to painting specific areas of rural France centred on his respective villages – mainly Hérisson to begin with and then Saint-Privé. These works, for example his Salon entry of 1875 *The Oaks at Château-Renard*, were typical of the nationalistic trend for images of rural France, characterised by deep-rooted traditional communities.

During the Second Empire the *paysage historique* had become somewhat unfashionable, but with the advent of the MacMahon regime the artist's paintings appear to have been well-suited to the conservative climate of official tastes.¹⁶⁰ His submission of *Vue du Colisée* to the Salon of 1878, along side a *Souvenir de l'Allier*, appears to have been an emphatic gesture of support for both the *paysage historique* and government policy. A letter to Allemand describing the Salon of 1877 had complained, 'Plus rien d'élevé, la mare à cochons plus que jamais...'¹⁶¹ reinforcing the idea that this painting of the following year was an emphatic statement of his artistic values. Bénédite also cited Harpignies's disdain for the modern trend in landscape painting: 'Ah! Faiseurs de mares à cochons et de canotiers, réalistes intransigeants peintres des bords de Marne et d'Oise et autres sujets rebattus, allez donc voir la vallée du Poussin et la vallée Égérie, là vous verrez du vrai paysage!' Bénédite did not date his quotation although he did comment on the irony of this statement considering that Harpignies would spend the last 46 years of his life painting just such landscapes of rural France.¹⁶²

Monet's reaction to the post-war environment was very different. As a young and aspiring artist, his objections to the rather restrictive conservatism of the new regime were voiced in his provocatively modern and unconventional paintings. Since the first Impressionist exhibition in 1874, his reputation among the official forums had been one of notoriety. Although highly successful at first, by the late 1870s his sales were dwindling. The Impressionist group was losing its impetus and impending recession was hindering the market in luxury goods, such as paintings. Furthermore, the suburbs and cities, which until now had been the main subject of his iconography, were becoming increasingly unattractive

¹⁶⁰ LANOË, 1905, p.126, discusses Harpignies paintings and the hate of the *paysage historique*

¹⁶¹ Harpignies, letter to Allemand, 18 May 1877, transcribed in MIQUEL, 1975, p.761

¹⁶² Cited in BÉNÉDITE, 1917, p.220

with the growth of industrialisation and overcrowding.¹⁶³ In 1878 he would find himself desperate to make money in the contemporary art market, with the example of artists such as Harpignies to follow.

In moving to Vétheuil it appears that Monet was not only attempting to save money but was also taking advantage of an opportunity to remodel himself and his art. The change in his subject matter was drastic. In May 1878, only a few months before Monet began to paint the rural environment of the village, Duret had written, 'Monet is hardly attracted to rustic scenes. ... The artist is drawn toward the ornate depiction of nature and urban scenes. He prefers to paint flowering gardens, parks and groves.'¹⁶⁴ In contradiction to his distinctive scenes of the modern urban environment he began to paint the picturesque rural views that the general Parisian public was more accustomed to. As a result of having to paint and sell as much as possible Monet's time at Vétheuil was the most productive of his career. He painted 232 paintings in just over three years, which included three brief excursions to the coast. 97 of these works contained either the village of Vétheuil or the hamlet of Lavacourt. His repetition of these motifs would not only have made his paintings quicker, but it is also possible that Monet hoped such iconography would appeal to a broader audience. Far from being confrontational it represented a comfortingly familiar image of self-contained structure and peaceful escapism; an accurate response to modern bourgeois idealism.¹⁶⁵

The two artists' differing stylistic ideologies remained dominant factors in distinguishing their works. However, it was not simply the appearance of their paintings which contributed to their differing market status but also the way in which they promoted them. Despite Frantz's claim that Harpignies 'shrank from self-advertisement', the artist was successful in

¹⁶³ See TUCKER, 1982, pp.155-187, especially at 186

¹⁶⁴ Duret, T., *Les peintres impressionnistes*, Paris, Librairie Parisienne, H. Heymann and J. Pebois, May 1878, translated in STUCKEY, 1985, pp.65-67, at 67

¹⁶⁵ e.g. See Herbert, R., "Industry in the Changing Landscape from Daubigny to Monet" in HERBERT, 2002, pp.1-21 at 20

exploiting several areas of the market.¹⁶⁶ His renown as a water-colourist, which according to Gosset was established as early as 1851, earned him a substantial annual fee. Harpignies professed, ‘Une importante maison d’édition qui possédait galeries à New York et à Londres me fit la commande d’un minimum de cinquante aquarelles par an, me laissant la faculté d’aller jusqu’à cent. Ceci me permet de gagner 70 000 francs dans une année!’¹⁶⁷ This is a stark contrast to Monet’s total sales of 1878, which according to Charles Stuckey only came to 4000 francs.¹⁶⁸ Of course Harpignies’s sales of his other works can be added to his income. The secondary sale of Harpignies’s *Paysage avec cour d’eau* by the collector Gustave Arosa for 540 francs in 1878 may be compared with Monet’s unsuccessful request for 100-150 francs from Charpentier, in December of the same year, for a painting that he had sent without being solicited.¹⁶⁹ A month later Monet could not even sell *Vétheuil dans le brouillard* to Jean-Baptiste Faure, the famous baritone, for 50 francs. Monet was at a stage where he had to sell anything he could to get money. Harpignies on the other hand, according to Gosset, kept back around 1 500 000 francs worth of paintings as security, rather than selling them and flooding the market.¹⁷⁰

Many of Harpignies’s paintings were modestly sized landscapes for display in the home and sold through Parisian dealers, most notably after 1883 through Arnold & Tripp.¹⁷¹ He also publicised his work by exhibiting larger more monumental pictures in the Salon. Furthermore, his work was also successful abroad, in Britain and the USA. The presence of the village motif pervaded; although, the publication of the catalogue raisonné would be required before any more specific statistical analysis could be made.¹⁷² It certainly indicates,

¹⁶⁶ FRANTZ, 1909, p.260

¹⁶⁷ Cited in GOSSET, 1982, p.32

¹⁶⁸ STUCKEY, 1995, p.204. See also a bar graph of Monet’s income in JOEL, 2002, p.82

¹⁶⁹ MIREUR, 2001, p.440; and WILDENSTEIN, 1979, letter 145

¹⁷⁰ GOSSET, 1982, p.32

¹⁷¹ See BÉNÉDITE, 1917, p.227; and MIQUEL, 1975, III, p.764 at 1883

¹⁷² A catalogue raisonné of Harpignies work by Robert Hellebranth is in the process of being compiled.

however, that his choice of subject matter held a resonance for a significant proportion of the prospective audience for French paintings. Without mentioning his wealthy family background and the income he received from teaching, Harpignies's astute approach to the market had rendered him extremely affluent. In contrast, Monet's audience was limited. He restricted his creativity to the production of oil paintings which were mostly aimed at the private buyer. He was further disadvantaged at this time by his lack of dealer support. Around the time of the 1st Impressionist exhibition Monet had received substantial financial investment from Durand-Ruel, however the dealer was unable to sustain his commercial backing and the artist's sales had declined ever since. At the time of his move to the countryside, the buyers of Monet's paintings therefore consisted of a selection of more daring collectors and the artist's friends and creditors. Some of his main patrons during his stay at Vétheuil were De Bellio, Caillebotte and Duret. His marketing, in the more desperate times, was reduced to what could almost be defined as begging letters.

Nonetheless, Monet was far more of a self-publicist than Harpignies, particularly in the presentation of his own persona. He was strongly aware of the power of the press and wrote to Durand-Ruel later in 1883, 'on ne fait rien sans la presse.'¹⁷³ In Vétheuil, now casting himself as a rural landscapist it seems that Monet was keen to identify himself as a solitary artist and/or inhabitant. Read in its full context, his letter to Duret in 1880 asking for news from Paris stated, 'du reste, de plus en plus paysan, je ne sais guère rien de nouveau.'¹⁷⁴ But it was more as a marker of his isolation from Paris, rather than any active pursuit of peasant labour and being involved in a rural community. It is possible he was trying to set himself apart from the popular artist colonies which were booming at this time, but more importantly he also seems to have been distancing himself from the original perceptions of Impressionism. His growing isolation from the rest of the group was marked. His

¹⁷³ WILDENSTEIN, 1979, letter 337

¹⁷⁴ WILDENSTEIN, 1979, letter 203

participation in the 4th Impressionist exhibition of 1879 was very reluctant and he made no submission at all to the 5th or 6th. He was criticised for commercialism and mass production, not forgetting the acrimonious response by the rest of the group to the suggestion that he might submit work to the Salon, published in *Le Gaulois*. Apparently unwilling to relinquish the 'Impressionist' epithet that had brought him fame, however, he reasserted, 'I still am and always will be an Impressionist.'¹⁷⁵ Duret, who would latterly write the preface to the exhibition catalogue for Monet's exhibition at *La Vie Moderne* in 1880 and the journalist Taboureux, for example, both supported the myth that Monet painted entirely *en plein air*, never using a studio. To this day Monet is portrayed as the archetypal Impressionist, largely because of his direct depictions of nature.

The artist also made several practical steps towards selling his paintings. Shortly after moving to Vétheuil Monet wrote to Petit explaining his situation and requesting a meeting.¹⁷⁶ Petit was a slightly more conservative dealer than Durand-Ruel and supplied 'artistic' paintings to the high end of the market.¹⁷⁷ Having again experimented with different subject matter, Monet was able to sell him a still life and two snow scenes a year later for 1100 francs in total. The dealer promised to buy more then advised Monet to raise his prices and add value to his work.¹⁷⁸ With Petit in particular in mind, the artist hoped that his submission to the Salon would again have a positive effect on his sales. He wrote to Duret, 'ce n'est pas par goût que je fais cela, et il est bien malheureux que la presse et le public aient pris si peu au sérieux nos petites expositions bien préférables à ce bazar officiel.'¹⁷⁹ Hence he put

¹⁷⁵ Taboureux, É., "Claude Monet" *La Vie Moderne*, 12 June 1880, translated in STUCKEY, 1986, p.89-93

¹⁷⁶ WILDENSTEIN, 1979, letter 138

¹⁷⁷ HOUSE, 2004, p.200

¹⁷⁸ WILDENSTEIN, 1979, letter 170

¹⁷⁹ WILDENSTEIN, 1979, letter 173

forward three canvases to the Salon jury, of which his ‘plus sage, plus bourgeois’¹⁸⁰ *Lavacourt* was predictably the only one to be accepted.

The fact that the subject of the painting showed a tranquil view of a typical French riverside village was no coincidence. It followed many successful Salon paintings of villages. Most notably, perhaps, was one by Busson of the *Village of Lavardin*, 1877, and also Harpignies’s *The Oaks of Château-Renard*. Among Harpignies’s later Salon entries, Appollo de Bélina also listed two Saint-Privé landscapes from 1881 and 1882 as some of his principal works.¹⁸¹ Harpignies was an archetypal example of a successful Salon landscapist. He was a firm representative of the traditional values of the classical landscape and the formal teachings advocated by the academic institutions. His paintings were also hung in the Musée de Luxembourg and he was awarded a plethora of medals and honours, culminating in his being made a Grand Officier de la Légion d’Honneur in 1911.¹⁸² The critic Dayot, despite criticising his paintings, named Harpignies and Pelouse, ‘les meilleurs parmi les meilleurs des paysagistes contemporains,’ in 1890.¹⁸³ By building up such a prominent reputation of official esteem, it would have immediately placed a higher value on his smaller works from which he made his income.¹⁸⁴

Although Monet may have aspired to similar effects in introducing his work to the Salon, as observed by the prominent critic Philippe Burty, being accepted was not enough.¹⁸⁵ These paintings of Monet’s were not Salon pieces. Rather than being eye-catching among the

¹⁸⁰ WILDENSTEIN, 1979, letter 173

¹⁸¹ De BÉLINA, 1883, p.387 re. *Vallée du Loing à Saint-Privé (Yonne)*, 1881; and *les Bords du Loing à Saint-Privé(Yonne)*, 1882.

¹⁸² His other awards included Salon medals in 1866, 1868, and 1869; Chevalier de la Légion d’Honneur, 1871; Croix de la Légion d’Honneur, 1875; Croix d’Officier de la Légion d’Honneur, 1883 ; Grande Médaille d’Honneur, 1897 ; Grand Prix du Salon, 1900 ; Commandeur de la Légion d’Honneur, 1902.

¹⁸³ DAYOT, 1890, p.46

¹⁸⁴ See FRANTZ, 1909, p.265

¹⁸⁵ Burty, “The Salon of 1880”, *La République Française*, 19 June 1880, translated in STUCKEY, 1988, p.93

hoards of paintings, which his earlier works might have been, Monet was now painting harmonious works for individual contemplation in bourgeois drawing rooms. Despite being larger, there was nothing grandiose or didactic about *Lavacourt*, which had been made especially conformist for the occasion. The effect of its high hanging only added to making it seem pallid and insignificant. Although much of the bourgeois market that he needed to attract did go to the Salon, the venue was completely unsuitable and its reluctant jury system had forced all the qualities of originality out of Monet's work.

It was through the Parisian dealers that Monet would eventually meet his market. His one man exhibition at the headquarters of *La Vie Moderne* magazine proved to be a far more suitable forum. Just as Monet had publicised himself as a solitary artist, he now made a show of solitary strength rather than trying to assimilate himself with the sea of Salon artists. Neither was it his paintings of the village which would win commendation but his more striking works, such as his *débâcle* scenes. And in his return to the Impressionist group in their 7th exhibition in 1883, it was the bright red of his *Champ de coquelicots près de Vétheuil* and the drama of his cliff views that caught the eyes of the critics. After 1881, his verbal agreement with Durand-Ruel assured him more financial income and gave him the flexibility to experiment with new subject matter and new ways of painting it. The success of Monet's paintings grew substantially over the course of the 1880s, in France and overseas. Even Harpignies would later seem bitter regarding the success of Impressionism, saying to Lanoë, 'Si vous voulez vous mettre à badigeonner des toiles pour gagner tout de suite de l'argent, ... faites de l'Impressionnisme, mais vous n'apprendrez rien.'¹⁸⁶

The fact that these two very different artists both used the village motif in their paintings, demonstrates the broad recognition and also the malleability of such iconography. The connotations of these villages as symbolising traditional communities which functioned

¹⁸⁶ LANOË, 1905, p.124

within the rural landscape are basically the same. The ways in which the artists treated and presented them, however, signify varied and opposing perspectives which could essentially appeal to a wide range of people. In Harpignies's works, while setting Saint-Privé in a 'pastoral' landscape, his refined finish and composition emphasised the structural facets of the village and the community, inviting the viewer into the scene to contemplate life within. The solidity of his technique would reinforce the comforting idea of stability and continuity. Alternatively, Monet's paintings do not deny such elements. The passivity of his distant views, however, prompts the viewer to adopt the role of the bourgeois visitor, like those in his paintings, making a fleeting escape to the countryside to appreciate nature.

Whether the way they expressed the motif was the result of personal or more objective motivation, for both it was a charged and familiar simplification of a number of issues which the majority of the urban audience would recognise and identify with. With the motif creating an immediate narrative in itself, it served as a fitting platform from which to demonstrate their stylistic capabilities and techniques. It would seem, however, that this symbol of traditional conformity was better suited to the artist with traditional and conforming values, in other words Harpignies.

Yet it was not necessarily their stylistic handling of the motif which dictated that it sold paintings for one and not so much for the other. More specifically, it was a question of how it suited their own ways of marketing their work and their own positions in the market. Harpignies's success was founded on his association with the conservative values of his predecessors and his unflinching principles with regard to upholding artistic tradition. The motif of the timeless and deep-rooted village therefore stood as an apt analogy for his own stance in the market. Where Monet attempted to accept such traditions to make money, however, he was unsuccessful. From the beginning, particularly after the 1st Impressionist exhibition, Monet's reputation had been founded on his originality, progressiveness and the

confrontational character of his work. By relying on such a popular motif, and especially by submitting to the Salon, Monet was going against the principles which he himself had preached. The paintings of Vétheuil were highly attractive, but they did not receive acclaim as they did not contain the striking element of originality which was expected of Monet's paintings. Harpignies, however, represented reliability and was therefore able to paint very similar motifs for several years in succession, if not decades. Monet's *Lavacourt* too, was not a painting without merit, but was entirely inconsistent with the artist's own standards in that it surrendered to a forum and form of painting which he had always snubbed. As expressed by Burty in 1883, 'We knew what obstacles he had to fight, and our only worry was that, as in the year before when he tried to show at the Salon, he would make too many concessions, thus sacrificing the honour of his cause.'¹⁸⁷

Conclusion

To distinguish between the instinctive appeal of the village motif and more rational associations regarding the contemporary context would constitute a rather artificial approach. The personal response of viewers may easily have been provoked by quite primitive ideals in respect of their own well-being. Arguably, however, the values they attached to the issues of the present day would play an equally significant role in shaping their subconscious reaction to the imagery. In the early Third Republic especially, the status of the rural landscape was a highly contentious and emotive issue, in both physical and artistic terms. Both artists and audiences would have been able to identify with the profundity of the motif, whether through a notion of personal involvement, contextual connotation, or allusion to artistic precedent. The popularity of village imagery shows its effectiveness in expressing and fulfilling the

¹⁸⁷ Burty, P., "The Salon of 1880", *La République Française*, 19 June 1880, translated in STUCKEY, 1988, p.93

cultural demands of French society. Like the many other landscapists who painted the motif, Monet and Harpignies's paintings were symptomatic of their personal, social and artistic environments. Their perception and treatment of their villages was as much a calculated response to the market as it was an intuitive reflection of their own place within the greater cultural context. The divergence in the two artists' beliefs only demonstrates further the breadth of relevance that the simple form of the village could hold. As reflected by the reception of Monet's paintings, however, it is clear that the success of the motif arose from a sense of long-established familiarity and not the confrontational modernity usually associated with his works.

Chapter Three

Village Location and Community Identity

The use and emphasis of specific components of the village was integral to the effect conveyed by the motif to the viewer. To understand the full implications of the motif, it is therefore necessary to determine the constituent elements considered essential to the authentic characterisation of the rural community. With this objective in mind, the remainder of the thesis will assume a thematic approach in analysing the main facets of village iconography and the perspectives from which they could be perceived. In initiating this process the current chapter will consider the role of location and how the specification of place could contribute to the imagery. Equally, it will also consider the value attached to the individual characteristics of the obscure parochial village against the stereotypes already established by urban tastes. First of all, it will contemplate the evolving function of location in landscape painting throughout the nineteenth century, with the purpose of establishing the relative importance of location amid the landscapes of the Third Republic. The second section will then discuss the ways in which the identity of a village might be conveyed visually. In this respect, it will focus in particular on the significance of the church spire as a marker of both the site and character of the community in religious and secular terms. Then, the following section will take into account the more practical aspects of painting provincial villages, concentrating on the increase in accessibility and travel, as well as the developing relationship between art and tourism. Subsequently, all these ideas will be explored further in a case study on paintings of Breton villages, in particular Pont-Aven.

Though subtle, the change in the function and status of location in French landscape painting over the course of the nineteenth century was a distinct indication not only of shifting social values but also the artistic developments of the time. It was only latterly, for instance, that the specific structure and identity of little-known provincial villages gained any degree of significance in art. It is therefore important to consider the ways in which the idea of location was treated and perceived amid the different artistic trends and movements. From neo-classicism to naturalism, whether the influence was residual or emerging, all bore some relevance to the landscape painting of the Third Republic.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the established tastes for neo-classical landscapes gave little priority to the direct portrayal of specific locations. The typical *paysage historique* depicted a fictitious landscape which was strictly composed and painted in a studio remote from any actual rural location. Where specific landscapes were identified, they were often the imagined reconstruction of a place in a classical myth, or perhaps an existing Roman or Grecian monument set in an implicitly 'historic' period. Valenciennes's *L'Ancienne ville d'Agrigente* (fig.63) is an example from the late eighteenth century. Based on the ruins in the Valley of Temples in Sicily, the artist has developed his knowledge of the Roman remains into an elaborate idealisation of what this town would have been like during the apogee of the classical era. Visual, topographical and archaeological accuracy are freely conceded to aesthetic effect and intellectual narrative. The Italianate or Greek landscapes and their monuments were in many ways perceived as the only type of subject matter worthy of formal landscape painting. The classical ideals which academics of the time strove for were not inherently present in scenes of France.

The nationalism which arose during the Napoleonic era fuelled an interest in the nation's own history, however, which continued to grow during the Orleanist monarchy that followed. *Paysages historiques* of French subjects grew in popularity. Paintings such as Jean Remond's *Carloman blessé à mort dans la forêt d'Yveline* (fig.64), which was commissioned by King Louis XVIII in 1821, retained the stylistic aesthetic of neo-classicism, as well as structuring the landscape around a literary narrative. Rather than a scene from classical mythology, however, the subject of King Carloman, who died in 884AD whilst hunting, was taken from the annals of French history. The inspiration for the image came from Louis-Antoine-François de Marchangy's *La gaule poétique*, an account of French cultural history published in several volumes between 1815 and 1817. The historic significance of the landscape was further justified in that the forest of Yveline had been situated in the area later to become the royal grounds of Versailles. The ordinary unanimated contemporary landscape was still not considered an appropriate subject for high art.

It was the 'lower' medium of prints, in the form of the *Voyages pittoresques*, which were perhaps most significant in popularising images of the contemporary landscape itself. Produced in luxurious albums to respond to the growing interest in French cultural history, they showed an archaeological perspective rather than a literary one. Although most of the illustrations were of historical monuments, they were not imagined reconstructions but portrayals of their current appearance, albeit aesthetically enhanced. The stylistic influence of neo-classical landscapes is still clear, for example in the lithographs produced for *La Bretagne contemporaine*. Published as late as the mid 1860s, the precepts of the *Voyages pittoresques* remained nonetheless unchanged. The *Ruines du château de Tonquédec* (fig.65), for example, is not dissimilar to Valenciennes's painting of Agrigentum in composition or stylistically, with its deep perspective, delicately decorative foliage and 'pastoral' figures. Importantly, however, the emphasis of the lithograph is very much on the ruins of the castle as a marker of France's national heritage. Any details, such as the

structure of the building itself or the figures in traditional costume, contribute to the identification of the place and not to academic narrative. These volumes of engravings were instrumental in familiarising members of the urban bourgeoisie with the attributes of the nation's regions, not only through the depiction of specific sites, but also through the establishment of recognisable stereotypes.

The gradual acceptance of the contemporary native landscape into French paintings during the first half of the nineteenth century is evident in statistics concerning paintings of Normandy in the Paris Salon, compiled by Dominique Lobstein.¹ While the number of such works was restricted to around three or four examples during the first two decades of the 1800s, there was a marked rise during the 1820s with as many as forty-one views of Normandy in 1824, out of a total 1904 paintings exhibited. This trend continued into the 1830s and 40s, where in most years the proportion of Normandy landscapes was approximately 2.5 – 3.5%. There was, however, a notable shift in the nature of the locations depicted. The titles in earlier Salon catalogues referred mostly to historic man-made monuments, for example, Louis-Philippe Crépin's *La rade de Cherbourg*; François Duval's *Fragments de ruines de l'Abbaye de Jumièges*; and Hypolite Garnier's *Vue d'un château gothique, département de Calvados*, all from the Salon of 1822. Paintings exhibited towards the middle of the century, conversely, showed an emerging emphasis on the natural phenomena of the region such as the sea and the cliffs. References to specific sites became less common in favour of vaguer titles such as *Vue prise en Normandie*, or *Environs du Havre / Rouen / or Trouville*. Paintings of the rest of the country also demonstrated this tendency, portraying areas such as mountains, forests and rivers. A symptom of the emerging aesthetics of romanticism and realism, the direct depiction of nature gradually became

¹ Lobstein, D., "Les peintres du Salon à la conquête de la Normandie" in FOWLE, 2006, publication pending

foremost. The structure and didacticism, which had lingered amid the fading authority of the *paysage historique*, were relinquished by an eventual majority of landscapists.

In reaction to the pre-composed fictions of academic landscapes, the ideals of the *paysage pittoresque*, or latterly *portraitiste*, lauded what was perceived as the sublime superiority of the natural world. The emphasis of many works now focussed on the faithful representation of ‘pure’ nature, unspoilt by human intervention, what Nicholas Green has termed the *Natura Naturans*.² This was facilitated after 1841 by the innovation of putting paint into metal tubes, which made it much easier for artists to work *en plein air* directly in front of the site they wanted to portray. Principles based on the close observation of nature would remain fundamental to the development of landscape painting until well into the Third Republic.

The effects of this new approach were clearly visible and formed a striking and somewhat controversial contrast to the studio-produced fabrications of the academic establishment. Stylistically, many artists employed looser and lighter brushwork which accommodated the movement and varying light present in reality, as well as the practicalities of painting outdoors; Corot’s *Ville d’Avray, Entrance to a Wood* (fig.66) is a good example. Initially, however, it was the changes in compositional structure which proved the most distinct. The direct observation and representation of ‘true’ nature revealed the contrived rigidity of the *paysage historique* and artists explored different solutions in portraying that which by definition was uncontained. Some, as in Antoine Chintreuil’s *Sous-bois* (fig.67), portrayed only a fragment or *morceau* of landscape; the lack of focus and symmetry rendering this glimpse of nature all the more convincing as an actual place. In addition, the cropping of the trees and the river by the edges of the canvas, and the emptiness of the foreground, invite the viewer to consider the environment beyond that depicted. The importance of observation was transposed for the viewer through the implication of viewpoint, drawing him in and

² GREEN, 1990, pp.11 and 67-120

immersing him in the subject to contemplate the grandeur of nature. Compositional devices such as roads leading the eye into the painting, for example in Corot's painting discussed above, would have had a similar effect. Greg Thomas has also identified the use of an 'ellipsoidal perspective' in many of Théodore Rousseau's paintings.³ In *Lisière de forêt; effet de matin*, 1850 (fig.68), for instance, the oval viewpoint imitates the viewer's field of vision. The function of the landscape was now to act as a meditative release; focusing on the atmospheric and emotive implications of nature rather than human activity and academic didacticism.

The École de 1830, exemplified by their paintings of the Forest of Fontainebleau, was a main protagonist. Of the more famous artists who went to Barbizon, Rousseau's paintings demonstrate well the effect of immersion in the untamed natural environment. Thomas has described his paintings saying, 'No previous landscape painter had ever left atmospheric effect so patently unembellished, so detached from human drama and free of social intervention.'⁴ While there were often figures or animals in his paintings, any narrative centred on the cyclic forces of nature to which the significance of man was only subsidiary.⁵ In *Village sous les arbres* (fig.69), he even made a village seem part of nature itself; embedded in the forest and remote from urban civilisation.

The relevance of location in painting the *Natura Naturans* lay more in the general assertion that the scenes were distant from the city and in helping to typify the type of environment. The viewer's preconceptions of that place also played an important role. The impact of the paintings emanating from the Forest of Fontainebleau was apparent in the numbers of artists who went there and eventually Parisian tourists as well. Both in the form of paintings and then as a place in itself, the Forest took on the role of a garden to complement the city, a

³ THOMAS, 2000, pp.34-37

⁴ THOMAS, 2000, p.30

⁵ See THOMAS, 2000, p.33-34

temporary place of relaxation and escape; in the words of the journalist Théophile Thoré, for ‘restoring mental and spiritual equilibrium from the city’s frenzy.’⁶ Although the life of the emerging colony revolved around the small village of Barbizon, it rarely appeared in paintings and neither did its resident artists. Instead, the landscapists preferred to concentrate on the increasingly illusionary remoteness of the surrounding plains and woodland. There is a sense that for the Parisian viewer the detachment from the city also meant a detachment from reality. Frédéric Henriet, a friend of Charles-François Daubigny’s, wrote retrospectively with reference to the artists in the Forest, ‘...what does the echo of the boulevard ... mean to him now that he has cut the mooring that tied him to real life in order to sail off into the true ideal!’⁷ Reiterated in the paintings of the area, such images also offered a form of psychological relocation to the viewer. This was made all the more vivid by the implied fact that each canvas was a direct translation of the artist’s own experience of the scene.

Clearly, location did not play the same role in all the paintings during the mid nineteenth century and artists did paint specific rural locations of human construction. It appears, however, that among the more progressive works the emotive and atmospheric implications remained important in marking a place’s significance. Camille Corot and Jean-François Millet, for instance, painted their native villages: Ville d’Avray to the east of Paris, and Gruchy in Normandy. The relevance of these places was personal to each artist, which again may have reinforced the authenticity of the image, but also would have evoked poignancy in implying reminiscence. Millet’s, in particular, imply a certain amount of sentimentality. In *Un bout du village de Gréville*, c.1865-6 (fig.70), for example, the inclusion of a mother and child alludes to the artist’s own infancy. He spoke of the painting in a letter to his friend and agent Alfred Sensier saying, ‘O espaces qui m’avez fait rêver quand j’étais enfant, me sera-t-

⁶ Thoré, letter to his mother, 1837, cited in GREEN, 1990, p.69

⁷ Henriet, F., “Impressions and Souvenirs” in *Le paysagiste aux champs*, 1876 (revised ed.) cited in HOUSE, 1995, p.18

il jamais permis de vous faire seulement soupçonner?’⁸ It was not until the next generation of artists, and the changes in attitude accompanying the Third Republic, that the identity of the remote rural locations regained the level of general resonance in landscape painting as maintained in the *Voyages pittoresques*.

Despite the enduring influence of the École de 1830, in the early Third Republic there appears to have been a significant shift away from conveying the changing moods of nature, in favour of more structured narratives focussed on specific places. The critic René Ménard’s review of the Salon of 1870 shows an awareness of both, for example. In commenting on the work of Corot and Daubigny he wrote, ‘La plaine, la forêt, la prairie, la mer, tout ce qui représente une idée générale, prête bien plus à la rêverie que la représentation d’un accident local.’⁹ Evidently he still regarded the former as preferable. Even those artists closely associated with the École de 1830 showed increasing enthusiasm for the ‘humanised’ landscape, or the *paysage animé*. Camille Bernier’s *D’Annadour, Bannalec*, c.1873 (fig.71), for example, is comparable to Rousseau’s *Lisière de forêt; effet de matin* in composition, style and subject matter. Yet in contrast to Rousseau’s rather meditative ‘natural’ landscape, Bernier’s painting attracts attention to the human and social implications of the scene. The insertion of figures in the foreground, the interaction of the animals, and the gate to the right hand side, cause the viewer to consider what the critic Louis de Fourcaud described as ‘l’homme dans son milieu.’¹⁰ The Breton location disclosed by the title of the work and the woman’s distinctive costume is integral to this narrative aspect of the painting. As well as contributing to the characterisation of the landscape itself, it would also have caused the viewer to reflect on the inhabitants’ traditions and lifestyle. Now ‘humanised’, the rural landscape offered not only escapism from urban life but an alternative form of existence.

⁸ Millet, letter to Sensier, 3 January 1866, cited in ARTS COUNCIL of GREAT BRITAIN, 1976, p.173

⁹ MÉNARD, 1870, p.55

¹⁰ De FOURCAUD, 1884, p.468

In addition to the increasing overcrowding and industrialisation in the cities, the growing popularity of rural landscape paintings was due to a number of factors which also affected the way they were painted. It was perhaps not a coincidence, for example, that this resurgence in structured social narrative appears to have occurred in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War. At this time of uncertainty and insecurity there was certainly a strong psychological need for moral and cultural structure, to which paintings of established provincial communities would have constituted an astute response. Again, precision in depicting the location was considered an important element, reassuring the viewer of the image's authenticity and enhancing his involvement in the work. The increasing prevalence of painting *en plein air*, and the development of the naturalist ideology, only accentuated such demands. Salon reviews consistently referred to the importance of being able to identify the place portrayed in a landscape painting. Ménard, for example, complained about a painting by Georges-François Guiaud of a Breton subject saying, 'tout cela n'est pas particulier à la Bretagne et pourrait être pris partout ailleurs.'¹¹ André Michel, in his review of the 1885 Salon, explained the attitudes regarding landscape painting, saying,

Si vous peignez un paysage, il faut qu'on puisse reconnaître la contrée, dire la température, le mois de l'année, l'heure du jour; si vous faites un paysan, il faut qu'on puisse distinguer s'il est du nord ou du centre, de l'est ou de l'ouest;...¹²

Paradoxically, the portrayal of an 'authentic' view of a location in most cases did not prioritise the depiction of the place as it was in reality. With the viewer or critic as final judge, it was often their expectations which held precedence over what the artist saw or experienced in actuality, thus encouraging stereotypes rather than dispelling them. In their attempts to convey the individuality of a place, artists often resorted to those features which

¹¹ MÉNARD, 1870, p.56

¹² MICHEL, A., 1885, p.400

were most distinctive and familiar to their audience. As in Bernier's painting, the use of figures in the local costume was a simple way of expressing location. For this reason the details of an area's traditional dress were often accentuated in paintings, even though urban fashions were becoming more available and infiltrating many rural communities. The artist Aimé Perret's genre scenes, for example, often took advantage of the distinctive costumes of eastern France in emphasising the parochial idiosyncrasies of the people he was painting, as in *Une baptême bressan*, 1877 (fig.72). The houses of the village in the background were also typical of the Pays de Bresse. Certainly, in landscape paintings traditional styles of buildings and monuments could also be used to identify a place.

Consistent with the requirements of naturalism, the authenticity of a landscape was not simply dependent on visual accuracy, but also on the conveying of the place's inherent character. André Michel, for instance, described it as 'la recherche du caractère individuel et de la stricte vérité...'¹³ In this sense aspects such as costume and monuments were also effective in connoting an innate set of traditions and a specific cultural background. To depict the full character of a landscape, however, it was necessary to integrate the implicit human significance of a place with the natural terrain from which the community had emerged. The village encapsulated a juncture between the two. An analysis of the human geography of French villages by Albert Dauzat, *Le village et le paysan de France*, considers the interdependent relationship between the physiognomy of villages, physical landscape and human culture.¹⁴ He explains, for example, that the geography of an area might account for the positioning, structure and livelihoods of villages and their communities. However, the exigencies of the inhabitants' lifestyles, as well as their cultural traditions, would also be evident in the visible countenance of the settlement. The rustic buildings in Charles Montlevault's *Paysage* (fig.73), for instance, dominate the composition. While echoing the

¹³ MICHEL, A., 1885, p.400

¹⁴ DAUZAT, 1941, pp.27 and 36-38

form of the Bugey region's cliffs behind, they also embrace the inhabitants in their daily life. Made from the natural materials provided by the surrounding countryside, using local traditional practices to suit the lives and activities of the local peasants, the village buildings express the essential culmination of local identity.

The popularity of paintings of villages was in many ways indicative of a revitalised appreciation of the French provinces. Yet it was the established stereotype of each location which was the source of most resonance for the mainly uninformed urban audience. The modern naturalist landscape oscillated between recreating the authentic individuality of the subject and representing a more generalised poetic 'truth' which would be recognisable to the viewer. A result of artistic evolution, it demonstrated a combination of ideals. The principles of the *École de 1830*, for instance, had been retained in depicting contemporary rural subject matter directly from nature. From another perspective, however, the development of the *paysage animé* also reflected a naturalist and nationalist revival of ideals established by the *paysage historique*. Paintings of structured communities were full of moral and social connotations, and in specifying location could be put into a national context as well. As a symbol of both the nation's landscape and the character of its people, village landscapes epitomised the parts which would exemplify the whole.

Location, religion and la patrie

Among all the buildings which would have made up a village the church was in the majority of cases the most conspicuous. As a consistent feature of the rural community, it is no surprise that the church spire became one of the main components of the stereotypical village motif. The paintings by Monet and Harpignies discussed in the previous chapter have already demonstrated the efficacy of the church spire in drawing attention to the villages'

presence and pinpointing their location. Often the appearance of a spire on the horizon, or from behind a hill, was sufficient to suggest the presence of an entire village invisible to the person viewing the picture. In Emmanuel Lansyer's *Le vallon de Kergueler*, 1885 (fig.74), for example, one immediately connects the faint church spire on the horizon with the peasant girl in the foreground and the inference of a greater community. As well as being a topographical marker, the church and its belfry were fundamental in distinguishing the identity of each village. Even more so than the houses, it embodied the collaborative product and focus of each community's traditions and beliefs. This section will therefore explore the village church's role in defining the religious and secular identity of each village, as well as its contribution to defining the more general concept of *la patrie*.

The close association between the peasant community and the church, as a building and as an institution, was endemic amid rural imagery throughout the nineteenth century. The spire, belfry, or *clocher*, in particular appears to have been the symbol which unified all the practical and social elements of the surrounding landscape and its inhabitants. The range of its bell denoted the parish's territory and its architectural structure asserted its individual character.¹⁵ Gabriel LeBras has written an impassioned account explaining the importance of the village church's role, in *l'Église et le village*. He stresses the importance of the bell-tower stating,

Le clocher est le véritable centre du village et le symbole de sa personnalité. Sa forme, sa hauteur, son existence même suscitent la fierté parfois la vanité des villageois. Ils imitent les villes voisines et tentent parfois les surpasser ...¹⁶

Indeed, Alain Corbin's book *Village Bells: Sound and Meaning in the Nineteenth-Century French Countryside* details the value with which communities regarded their bells and the

¹⁵ See CORBIN, 1998, p.95; and LeBRAS, 1976, p. 85

¹⁶ LeBRAS, 1976, p. 47

effort expended in installing and protecting them.¹⁷ By implication the prominence of the church, through both sight and sound, reflected the strength and unity of the community as well as asserting its independence. As described by LeBras,

Dans ses frontières, jalousement défendues, riche de monuments si divers, le village a maintenu, autour de l'église sa cohésion et son unité ; à côté de ses voisins, son autonomie et son particularisme ; en face de toutes les puissances, son existence et son statut.¹⁸

In connoting such a close and resolute community, where the culture and lifestyle were so heavily centred on the church, this typical idea of the self-contained village and its spire inevitably involved a sense of narrow-minded insularity and backwardness. The rather pejorative French phrase 'l'esprit de clocher', to describe this type of rural mentality, is symptomatic of such inferences. The French historian Philippe Boutry has defined it as 'curieuse expression, qui allie la découverte de l'*esprit de la localité*, du *tempérament régional* ou communal, à sa dépréciation, pour cause d'étroitesse d'horizon ou d'intelligence...'¹⁹ Corbin interprets the phrase as indicative of villages' territoriality and their resistance to outside influence.²⁰ In the context of the nineteenth century in particular, the differences between the modern industrialising cities and the traditional agricultural villages were emphatic. The idea of insularity was therefore equally evocative with regard to resistance to change. Such connotations are also taken into account by Corbin in considering the sound of the church bells:

Listening to a bell conjures up a space that is by its nature slow, prone to conserve what lies within it, and redolent of a world in which walking was the chief mode of locomotion. Such a sound is attuned to the quiet tread of a peasant.²¹

¹⁷ CORBIN, 1998, see pp.45-48 and 73-80

¹⁸ LeBRAS, 1976, p.115

¹⁹ BOUTRY, 1986, pp.17-62 at 18

²⁰ CORBIN, 1998, p.95-96

²¹ CORBIN, 1998, p.96

Equally, the sight of the *clocher* in a painting could incur the same effects over the visual landscape. Millet's painting *L'Angélus* (fig.75), had set a firm precedent in this respect. Painted in 1857, it had gained iconic status by the 1880s and for many embodied the essence of rural France.²² The small village church on the horizon is central to the meaning of the painting – the peasants' heads bent in prayer as the sound of the Angelus bells emanates from its belfry. Sensier wrote in his biography of the painter, 'In this truly original picture, Millet wished to give an impression of music; he wanted the noises of the country, and even the church-bells, to be heard.'²³ Rather than the inherently negative implications of *l'esprit de clocher*, to many during this period the symbol of the church spire, would have appeared reassuring and remedial amid the insecurities of modern times. Urban attitudes became rather protective of old-fashioned and traditional rural life, but their incentives appear to have been based more on preserving an ideal than empathy for rural inhabitants.

Although the common association of the village and the parish church with archaism may have been idealised, if not ridiculed, it was not without a factual basis. Wielding their influence over the community, many village priests were central in leading the campaign against change and fighting for the preservation of their communities' traditions and way of life.²⁴ Rural depopulation due to urban industrialisation, as well as improved communications between the towns and the countryside, were perceived as a threat to the long-established social structures of many small communities, as well as adherence to religious practice. The discontented rural clergy also aspired to the ideals of a romanticised past. Ralph Gibson has discussed this constant allusion to *autrefois* in his study of the social history of French Catholicism, quoting an article from the *Semaine Religieuse* of Montpellier, written in 1877.

²² See ARTS COUNCIL of GREAT BRITAIN, 1976, p.89; and FRATELLO, 2003, *passim*

²³ SENSIER, 1881, p.132

²⁴ See LeBRAS, 1976, p.117

In past times, the priest was held in great respect in the countryside... the family was the vestibule of the church... in past times no one read pernicious books in the countryside... in past times there was more joy, more gaiety, you could hear singing everywhere... in past times, there was dancing only on the day of the local festival, today Sunday is no longer the Lord's day but the day of the *bal*... in past times... there was neither café nor billiard-hall... there weren't any newspapers.²⁵

Gibson argues that if pressed to specify the exact period the article was referring to, he would suggest sometime before the French Revolution, perhaps in the first half of the eighteenth century.²⁶ Considered in light of the respective political regimes, the ideals of the late-nineteenth-century Catholic Church were certainly opposed to those of modern Republicanism.²⁷

Historically the Church had always sided with the monarchy – the God-given right to power, as opposed to the elected. The church had profited from the conservatism of the Second Empire, receiving significant state investment and greater freedom regarding education.²⁸ But while Marshal MacMahon's République des Ducs of the 1870s had strong monarchist leanings, the Opportunist Republic which followed made no compromises. The laws enacted between 1879 and 1886 began the motion toward the definitive separation of Church and State in 1905, and were fundamental in politicising the stance of village churches. Among the State's policies, the most contentious issue was the secularisation of education. The debate was founded on the notion that whoever taught the nation shaped its future, and was therefore highly significant in the Catholic Church's struggle to retain power. State schools gained in their dominance and by 1886 no member of a religious order was allowed to teach in them. Lessons had no religious content, but instead preached the ideals of a unified Republic. The new standardised curriculum ignored regional dialects, spoken in a large number of rural

²⁵ Cited and translated in GIBSON, 1989, p.98

²⁶ GIBSON, 1989, p.98

²⁷ See also SINGER, 1983, p.9

²⁸ See Boutry, P., "Industrialisation et déstructuration de la société rurale", in CHOLVY & HILAIRE, 1991, pp.271-309 at p.275; Anderson, R., "The Conflict in Education: Catholic secondary schools (1850-70), a reappraisal" in ZELDIN, 1970, pp.51-93; and TOMBS, 1996, pp.132-135

communes.²⁹ It was feared that the range of subjects taught might raise the ambitions of the young and encourage them to abandon their traditional background. The restrictions placed on the Church were therefore seen as a further blow to the independence and identity of rural villages.³⁰

This is not to say that the urban bourgeoisie were not also affected by secularisation. On the contrary, these were issues which affected the whole country, and to some extent polarised the nation between those tending toward the progressive and atheistic and those who were more conservative and religious.³¹ A number of epithets have been coined to convey the extent of the divide. It has been dubbed the French *Kulturkampf*, and both modern and nineteenth-century writers have often referred to ‘the two Frances’.³² Charles Renouvier, a renowned Republican, has been cited as saying as early as 1872,

There are two Frances in France, that of the clericals and that of the liberals ... there are no longer virtually any ideas or sentiments in common between the two groups, between these two peoples obliged nonetheless to live under the same civil law.³³

James McMillan’s analysis of this period has defined it as, ‘a kind of *cold* war which periodically irrupted into *hot* war...’³⁴ In Paris the conflict manifested itself mostly in newspaper rhetoric and political debate; in the countryside it was mainly the priests, mayors and *instituteurs* who vied for the loyalty of the villagers, sometimes in quite a violent manner.³⁵ The fact that some of the most vociferous opposition to the new laws was occurring

²⁹ See WEBER, 1976, pp. 67-94

³⁰ See PITIÉ, 1987, p.65

³¹ See TOMBS, 1996, p.145

³² e.g. TOMBS, 1996, p.139; and McMillan, J., “‘Priest hits girl’: on the front line in the ‘war of the two Frances’”, in CLARK & KAISER, pp. 77-101 at p.77

³³ Cited in McMillan, J., “‘Priest hits girl’: on the front line in the ‘war of the two Frances’”, in CLARK & KAISER, pp. 77-101 at 79; see also ZELDIN, 1970, pp.9-11

³⁴ McMillan, J., “‘Priest hits girl’: on the front line in the ‘war of the two Frances’”, in CLARK & KAISER, pp.77-101 at 77

³⁵ See McMillan, J., “‘Priest hits girl’: on the front line in the ‘war of the two Frances’”, in CLARK & KAISER, pp.77-101, for discussion on the subject and a case study of such conflict in Brittany.

in the provinces, however, would have helped to publicise and reinforce the stereotypical associations between the village, the church and the preservation of parochial culture.

In paintings of villages, the church was often key in conveying the motif as traditional and typical of that place. Although the peculiarities of one particular rural village may have been meaningless to the mainly Parisian audience, it was common for artists to stress the regional identity of a location. Edmond Petitjean's two paintings from the Salon of 1887, *Un village lorrain* and *Un village comtois* (figs.76 and 77), for example, through their non-specific titles are presented as the archetypal village of each region. The prominence of the church's *clocher* in each demonstrates the importance of its role in typifying the rural traditions of the respective provinces. The regional distinction between the traditional church towers is highlighted by the confusion of titles in the *Salon Illustré*. The distinctive bell-shaped *clocher* in *Un village comtois*, for example, confirms its location beyond doubt. Similar spires appear in several other paintings of the region such as Isenbart's *Avril en Franche-Comté* (fig.13) from the previous year. The implication of piety is also consistent with statistics concerning religious practice during this period. A map of religious practice estimated by bishops and prefects in 1877 marks Franche-Comté and Alsace-Lorraine among the most diligent regions. Gibson's analysis of the geographical trends in religious vitality lists the latter as one of the most fervent areas in France (map 4).³⁶ Also listed are Brittany, the Massif Central, the western Pyrenees, the extreme north and parts of the Alps.³⁷ It is no coincidence that Brittany, the first of these, was a particularly popular subject in paintings during the 1870s and 1880s.

As the following case study will show, the implication of piety in Breton iconography became particularly strong in the 1880s, concurrent with the controversy over secularisation. Pascal Dagnan-Bouveret's paintings, such as *Bretonnes au pardon*, 1887 (fig.78), are an

³⁶ GIBSON, 1986, p.170

³⁷ GIBSON, 1986, p.170

example. It was not necessarily the case, however, that the popularity of the pious community in such works reflected religious fervour among the urban bourgeoisie. Gibson has described Paris, for example, as having a long history of anticlericalism.³⁸ Although this type of imagery may have represented more conservative ideals, it was the sense of traditional culture which was most emphatic. As an element of this, the village church had gained increasing significance in symbolising the focus of rural life and a living link to the past. The importance of the church was unrivalled in most villages and the growing number of *mairies* did little to detract from its dominance, especially as implied in the visual imagery of the time. Vincent Van Gogh is one of very few artists to have painted the *mairie* during this period, in *Le mairie d'Auvers*, 1890 (fig.79). Although decked in flags and pennants for the *Fête Nationale*, it is isolated at the rear of an empty square with little reference to the rest of the village. It is arguable that as a non-native he may have been less susceptible to the usual village stereotype; however, his *L'Église d'Auvers*, 1890 (fig.80) still shows the image of the church to be more iconic and enduring.

Even in secular terms, the age, traditions and position of the church building ensured its dominance over the landscape, and its authority amid the community. In the words of LeBras: 'Quel que soit l'état religieux de la population, l'église préside le village.'³⁹ The regularity of the bells, and the clock on the side of the *clocher*, would have dictated the structure of the day; and the weather-vane on top would have indicated the changing of the weather and seasons to those working the land. Roads might converge at *la place de l'église*, and the church itself would have marked one of the main gathering places for the village inhabitants. Its influence over the functioning of day-to-day village life was something to be envied by the institutions of the secular Republic. Corbin, for instance, describes some of the disputes

³⁸ GIBSON, 1986, p.179

³⁹ LeBRAS, 1976, p.38; and see also CORBIN, 1998, p.98

arising between mayors and priests over who should issue the public announcements.⁴⁰

Considering in particular the church's role in defining location and individuality, its prominence would have been rather problematic in view of the Republican aim to unify *la patrie* under its own Republican ideology.

In a practical sense this was achieved through the stringent centralisation of the national communications network and administration, as, for example, with the standardisation of State education. The State was also responsible for promoting an image of the French nation which was all-encompassing and essentially secular. The new curriculum stressed the importance of geography, and books such as Augustine Fouillée's *Le tour de la France par deux enfants* conveyed to children the wonders of their native land.⁴¹ It was first published in 1877 under the pseudonym G. Bruno, after the seventeenth-century heretic who was burned at the stake by the Church. Latterly, after the separation of Church and State in 1905, all references to religion were also removed. This included the main characters' visit to Notre Dame Cathedral.⁴² The ideas regarding the identity of a nation projected by the prominent philosopher and theologian Ernest Renan, although he was not strongly partisan, were typical of the Republican outlook. In a lecture presented at the Sorbonne in 1882, entitled *Qu'est qu'une nation ?*, he stated, 'La religion ne saurait non plus offrir une base suffisante à l'établissement d'une nationalité moderne.'⁴³ Instead, he perceived the nation itself as a spiritual entity: 'Une nation est un principe spirituel, résultant des complications profonds de l'histoire, une famille spirituelle, non un groupe déterminé par la configuration du sol.'⁴⁴ He believed the noblest countries to be those of mixed blood, united not only by their native soil

⁴⁰ CORBIN, 1998, pp.170-171

⁴¹ BRUNO, 1925; and see STRACHAN, 2004, pp.96-98 for discussion

⁴² See AMALVY, 2002, p.2

⁴³ RENAN, 1997, III(iii)

⁴⁴ RENAN, 1997, III(v)

but also by the ‘soul’ of the people.⁴⁵ With such principles being adopted as a Republican ideology, the concept of *la patrie* was used, in effect, to be synonymous with the Republic.

With regard to identifying the location of villages in paintings, therefore, the conflict between Church and State to some extent manifested itself in a psychological struggle over where the emphasis of a subject fell – whether on the individuality and independence of the specific location, or on the generality of the place in typifying the nation as a whole. Paintings of villages, for instance, were effective in conveying the remote reaches of the French nation, as well as the long-established roots of its culture and community. Despite the village church being at the centre of such connotations in many works, seen in the greater context of *la patrie*, its religious relevance could be diluted to contribute to a more generalised and secular ideal of social structure, tradition and continuity. Charles Bigot, for example, in his discussion of the landscape paintings in the Salon of 1883, included the village with its church in his list of typical motifs: ‘...un village s’élève sur la colline, autour de la vieille église, au milieu des prés verts ou des champs cultivés;...’ He then recognized the contribution of the different motifs in typifying the illustrious nation, writing,

Chacun selon son goût, ses origines, ses affinités électives, s’est choisi dans notre grande France sa région préférée; ... Remercions-les tous également, ceux qui célèbrent sous tous ses aspects notre chère patrie et nous aident à mieux comprendre combien elle est belle et digne d’être aimée.⁴⁶

The emphasis of paintings such as Charles Busson’s *Le village de Lavardin (Loir-et-Cher)* (fig.21) is very much on its symbolising the archetypal (Republican) French village, rather than its representation of a specific place. Its size promotes a sense of importance beyond that of the obscure identity of this small community, and the placing of the church in the margins of the composition seems particularly apt considering the image’s eventual role. Purchased by

⁴⁵ RENAN, 1997, III(i) and (v)

⁴⁶ BIGOT, 1883, pp.5-6

the State for hanging in a State museum, viewers would have been encouraged to consider the work in its national context. As part of the Republic's nationalist policy, the landscape paintings distributed to the regional museums during this period were purposely selected to represent the different aspects of the cumulative whole. Although the public galleries inevitably displayed portraits of their own regions as a matter of civic pride, they were also sent works depicting far more distant provinces. Paintings of Normandy, for example, were sent to cities as far away as Bordeaux, Marseille, Dijon and Lille, so that even those who would never cross their own region's boundaries could become familiar with the distant corners of France. Considered together, however, these images conveying the diversity of the nation also seem remarkably similar in character. Comparing Busson's interpretation of Lavardin with Petitjean's paintings of Lorraine and Franche-Comté, albeit painted ten years apart, they are all similarly picturesque and compliant with urban and centralist ideals; the buildings appear generic and the peasants anonymous. Amid the trends of the Third Republic, despite the demand for landscape paintings showing different locations, the overwhelming tendency was to typify and ultimately to stereotype in accordance with the ideals of its audience, of which the State was a highly influential component.

It is clear that paintings of villages from this period could be interpreted at different levels. With regard to identifying the location, each community could be perceived as an individual place or indicative of the region or even the nation. Despite the naturalist demands for authenticity, the broader significance of a place was usually more relevant to the urban viewer. The village church and the *clocher* were especially constructive in asserting both the physical location, as well as connoting a number of recognisable elements which could contribute to the interpretation of the place's character. It was particularly evocative of ideas concerning the village's history and tradition, social structure, as well as Christian values; and the controversy over secularisation only highlighted such notions further. The sense of insularity and community identity suggested by the church was central in distinguishing the

village from the urban sprawl of the city, and accentuating its isolation from modern civilisation. By manipulating the viewers' perception of the paintings through composition, propaganda, or display, the balance of each painting between representing the general values of the nation or the exactitude of a specific place could vary. Particularly within the context of nationalist sentiment, encouraged by the centralist policies of the Republic, diversity was often contained under the unifying concept of *la patrie*.

Art and tourism

In addition to the religious and political elements of symbolism regarding paintings of different village locations, other factors would also have contributed to their appeal. Aspects which might have affected the artist or viewer's more immediate or personal environment were significant in shaping the developing motif. The impact of the Franco-Prussian War, for example, and the effects of industrialisation and modernisation in urban areas, had created a demand for escapism as well as encouraging idealism in rural imagery. In this respect, however, the specificity of location was arguably only relevant to the extent that the place was different and distant to the audience's own urban setting. The interest in provincial history exemplified by the *Voyages pittoresques* was far more exacting. Yet it was the ability to travel which was one of the most significant factors in reviving the relevance of place in landscape painting. It is therefore important to consider images of villages from the perspective of the viewer as a potential tourist and the artist as traveller. This section will examine the reciprocal relationship between landscape art and tourism. Initially, it will appraise the effects of improved communications on artistic imagery and practice, as well as on the expectations of the audience. It will then consider the subsequent status of village imagery as both a cause of tourist trends and as a result. Equally, the development of stereotypes and the idealisation of rural life are an essential part of this. To finish, the section

will discuss the phenomenon of the artist colony and the integration of the bourgeois landscapist into the peasant community.

The growth of the French communications network proved a major stimulus for change over the course of the nineteenth century. In 1867, for example, the Imperial Prosecutor in Agen referred to, 'Les routes, les chemins de fer, ces grand moteurs de la civilisation.'⁴⁷

Particularly after the mid 1860s, the State began to recognise the importance of a coherent and standardised system of roads and railways. The rate of expansion is clearly visible in contrasting maps of the rail network in respect of goods traffic from 1854 and 1878 (maps 5 and 6). Whereas until 1870 the relevant interests had been mainly commercial, the slow mobilisation of French troops at the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War further accentuated the need for an effective infrastructure. During the Third Republic, therefore, investment in roads and railways became a priority, especially under the severely centralist policies of the Opportunists. The 'Freycinet Plan', initiated in 1879 by Charles de Saulces de Freycinet, was an ambitious manifesto implementing a nationwide reform of communications. As a result, access to rural areas was vastly improved through vicinal roads and branch lines.⁴⁸ The repercussions were several – economic, political and social. In the context of this discussion, it was the ease and affordability of passenger travel that was of most significant effect.

The emerging trends in landscape painting were certainly linked to the accessibility of rural areas. In addition to the availability of paint in tubes, the expanding transport network was instrumental in facilitating the painting of the natural environment *en plein air*. Whereas previously most travel excursions had been the preserve of the wealthy and intrepid, by the middle of the nineteenth century Parisians, including artists, could venture to the countryside outside of the city within the space of a few hours and for relatively little cost. The former

⁴⁷ Imperial Prosecutor, Agen, 1867, cited in WEBER, 1976, p.195

⁴⁸ See ELWITT, 1975, pp.145-169; PRICE, 1983, pp.214-223

royal park of the Forest of Fontainebleau was attractive to artists as one of the closest areas of ‘wild’ nature to Paris. Adding to its popularity were the newly-established transport communications serving the area. Although the first major railway lines did not open in France until 1843, in 1840 the *Journal Général d’Affiches* was already advertising the prospective line from Paris to nearby Corbeil, as well as the coach and steamboat services available.⁴⁹ In 1849, the line was completed as far as Fontainebleau bringing many artists with it, including Millet.⁵⁰ But just as the railways had contributed to the appeal of the Forest of Fontainebleau among artists, it was also one of the factors behind its demise. The growing popularity of the area among tourists in general detracted from its ‘unspoilt’ charm, and as the railway network expanded further artists took advantage of the opportunity to explore more distant corners of the French landscape.

By the 1880s it was no longer fashionable to paint in the Forest. In 1886, the caricaturist and travel writer who published under the pseudonym Bertall wrote scathingly, ‘La légende de Fontainebleau, ... a produit une valeureuse école ; mais cette légende a fait son temps, et les invalides du pinceau sont maintenant les seuls à s’en contenter.’⁵¹ The general tourist trade continued to flourish, however; its survival largely due to the fame of the artists who had painted there. A guidebook by Louis Barron, written in 1890, demonstrates the significance of landscape artists with regard to recreational travel, consistently mentioning any well-known artists who painted at each site. Describing Barbizon, for example, he wrote,

... Barbizon, naguère rustique colonie d’artistes, devient à la mode, et beaucoup de Parisiens vont y passer les vacances. François Millet [sic.] repose dans le cimetière du hameau ; un médaillon en bronze, dû au sculpteur Chapu, et encastré dans une roche, unit le peintre de l’*Angélus* à son émule et ami Théodore Rousseau.⁵²

⁴⁹ See PRICE, 1983, p.209; and *Journal Général d’Affiches*, 31 January 1840, p.20, cited in GREEN, 1990, p.87

⁵⁰ See GREEN, pp.116-118

⁵¹ BERTALL, 1886, p.12 (the author’s true name was Charles Albert d’Arnoux)

⁵² BARRON, 1890, p.161

In some cases it seems that the fascination in the celebrity of the painter was greater than the interest in the landscape which he had depicted and had made him famous. This was especially true regarding those artists who were deceased. Millet is one example. Investigating the artist's late paintings of Normandy, for instance, a recent paper by Bradley Fratello has discussed the growing number of references to Millet in tourist guides promoting his native area.⁵³ Equally, Barron's guide also draws attention to Corot's house at Ville d'Avray and includes an illustration of it (fig.81).⁵⁴

Aside from the effects of the artists' fame; the tourist industry, the guidebooks and landscape art, were now closely linked in that they marketed imagery associated with specific places. At a time when the only other remote visual references were illustrations, or possibly black and white photographs, landscape paintings would have presented by far the most striking and elaborate perspective to prospective travellers. It is therefore unsurprising that the connection between tourism and art was so strong. The critic Alfred Darcel, for example, described the artist Alexandre Dubourg's Salon painting from 1869, *Sea Bathing at Honfleur*, (fig.82) as 'an advertisement for L.A. Dubourg's native town, for it reveals a fact of which we were ignorant, that there was sea bathing at Honfleur, and it reveals it to us with much charm.'⁵⁵ Works such as Jules Chenantais's *Huëlgoat*, 1880 (fig.83), also served an informative purpose. The painting depicts the boulders as the main point of interest and the village behind in indicating the location, as a guidebook might. The account of Mrs. Bury Palliser in her book *Brittany and its Byways* describes, for instance, the 'infinite variety of fantastic rocks' at Huëlgoat.⁵⁶ Even now, one of the websites offering tourist information on the village shows a photograph very similar to Chenantais's painting (fig.84). The fact that

⁵³ Fratello, B., "Footsteps in Normandy: Jean-François Millet and provincial nostalgia in late-nineteenth-century France" in FOWLE & THOMSON, 2003, pp.49-64 at 53-54

⁵⁴ BARRON, 1890, p.196

⁵⁵ Darcel, A., *L'Echo Honfleurais*, 19 June 1869, cited in NATIONAL GALLERY of SCOTLAND, 1986, p.36

⁵⁶ PALLISER, 1869, pp.301-302

artists went to such sites themselves, and depicted the ‘authentic’ experience of the scene *en plein air*, would also have contributed to the whetting of the tourist appetite. One journalist commented, for example, with regard to Édouard-Louis Boudier’s Salon painting *Village à Trémalo* (fig.85), showing a girl carrying wood towards a group of thatched cottages, ‘Il y fait bon, dans ce petit village de Trémalo ; on voudrait y goûter, en réalité, cette vie que les yeux viennent de saisir.’⁵⁷

There was certainly a developing tendency in landscape iconography to indulge tourist ideals. The apparent lessening in popularity of the concept of rural savagery towards the end of the nineteenth century, for example, coincides with the growth of tourism to rural areas. Contributing to this evolution in rural landscape paintings, the use of the village motif was common in the effectual civilising of the natural environment. Such developments are particularly evident in paintings of Brittany from this period. One of the most popular tourist destinations in France, it was renowned for its remoteness and ‘primitive’ culture. The artistic imagery of the time, however, clearly manipulates such aspects to appear more accommodating. In works such as Alexandre Ségé’s *Les chênes de Kertrégonnec*, 1870 (fig.86), for example, the appearance of a village community, though small, makes the rugged landscape instantly more convivial. Where the inhabitants were also featured, for example in Lansyer’s *Le vallon de Kergueler*, they also demonstrate the simplistic and peaceful rustic existence to which the visitor might have aspired.

There was, however, a significant contradiction between the preconceived ideals which tourists expected to find in the rural landscape and their practical demands. The material impact of the bourgeoisie at leisure on the so-called ‘unspoilt’ areas of the French countryside was considerable. Yet because the effects of tourism were inconsistent with the idea of the traditional peasant community, most artists neglected to integrate the two.

⁵⁷ ANON. (2), 1882

Paintings of urban holiday-makers were clearly desirable and were compatible with the demand for visual escapism. Nonetheless, such works remain separate from those depicting rustic villages and their peasant inhabitants. Images similar to Dubourg's of people at beach resorts, for example, were common. Depictions of riverside leisure in the suburbs may also be found in early Impressionist works. Monet and Renoir's paintings of *La Grenouillère* from 1869 are some of the best known (for example fig.87). The group's images of Argenteuil and the Parisian *banlieue* during this period were, however, rather exceptional. Few other artists conveyed the more permanent encroachment of bourgeois presence into rural or provincial areas. The 'country dotted with white villas and little wooden chalets' near Brest, described in Henry Blackburn's guide to Brittany, for instance, was not a subject ever broached in paintings of the area.⁵⁸

Paradoxically, the places which were perceived as attractive due to their individuality and isolation from modern and urban influences were often more vulnerable to modernisation, because of the effects of tourism. Barbizon, for example, developed in a short time from a hamlet made up of peasant small-holdings to a prosperous village catering to the many Parisian artists and sightseers who went there. Green has described it as 'a wholesale metamorphosis' both in economic and social terms.⁵⁹ The same process was repeated during the 1870s and 80s in Pont-Aven in Brittany, a highly popular destination among artists. The writer François Coppée wrote, 'Amateurs de voyages paisibles hâtez-vous d'aller à Pont-Aven, car, avant peu, les peintres et les touristes auront rendu l'endroit inhabitable.'⁶⁰ The more popular a place, the more susceptible it would be to an increasing profusion of preconceived ideals, prejudices and pictorial imagery. In areas which were visited and painted often, such influences could easily take precedence over the actual appearance of the site, which may have grown to be very distinct. Nina Lübbren, in her study of artist colonies,

⁵⁸ BLACKBURN & CALDECOTT, 1880, p.84

⁵⁹ GREEN, 1990, p.118

⁶⁰ François Coppée, *Contes en prose*, A. Lemarrie, Paris, 1880, cited in QUÉINEC, 1983, p.102

discusses the concept of the 'place-myth', defining it as, 'A set of widely-held and distributed core images toward which individuals orient their own experiences.' She adds that, 'Place-myths are powerful motors of meaning, and they stubbornly continue to govern what people think of a place even when it no longer conforms to the images.'⁶¹ Artists were certainly part-responsible for developing and promoting 'place-myths' in their works, but they were equally prone to their influence. Often little more than a tourist himself, the artist's relationship with the location was integral to his interpretation of it on canvas. For the urban outsider, a prolonged residence in a place was perceived as a way of overcoming the superficial glance of the sightseer and gaining an authentic experience. The English writer Katharine MacQuoid seemed particularly convinced of this idea. She spoke of the artists in her guidebook of Brittany: '... after some stay among them, they obtain a strange and weird fascination that seems to put him in sympathy with the reserved and primitive people of South Brittany.'⁶²

The establishment of artist colonies was symptomatic of artists' attempts to depict accurate images of the rural environment. However, they also reflected the growing appetite for travel – an artistic escape from the constraints of the city and academia. Although a significant number of artists did not originate from Paris, the city's reputation as the art capital of Europe, if not the world, meant that it was a magnet to many, particularly art students. Most would become integrated into the culture of the Parisian art world over the course of their education. Whereas the trend during the summer months among urban society was to leave for more temperate climes, artists also departed in search of places to paint. The travel writer Henry Blackburn described Pont-Aven saying, 'Here the art student, who has spent the winter in the Quartier Latin in Paris, comes when the leaves are green, and settles down for

⁶¹ LÜBBREN, 2001, p.116

⁶² MacQUOID, 1877, p.8

the summer to study undisturbed.⁶³ While such excursions were often quite prolonged – perhaps two to three months or sometimes indefinite – the distinction between the artist as an inhabitant and the typical urban bourgeois on vacation or *villégiature* was vague. The works which emerged from the colonies were very much representative of a perspective which oscillated between that of the urban outsider and the peasant inhabitant.

Inasmuch as artist colonies were established by artists with the purpose of painting there and experiencing life in a rural community, they also signified the presence of the social and material practicalities which would be conducive to a pleasurable stay. Indeed, commentators such as Honoré Daumier, in his caricature of *Landscape painters at Work*, 1862 (fig.88), appear to have regarded landscape painting more as an excuse for recreation rather than as a committed vocation. Just as artistic imagery was intrinsic in promoting tourist destinations, the converse was also true to some extent. Considering the numerous colonies in France during the period between 1870 and 1890 many comparisons can be drawn in this respect. Artists who went to Brittany, for example, where several colonies were established, could take advantage of the healthy air and sea-bathing for which it was renowned. Similarly, one of the main attractions of Grèz-sur-Loing, where a colony was formed as an alternative to Fontainebleau, was the presence of the river. Not only did it offer a versatile subject for landscape painting, but it was also considered important for the ‘amphibious activities’ it offered.⁶⁴

Accommodation was perhaps the most important factor, however. At the foundation of most colonies was the presence of a reliable and affordable inn or *pension*. At the origin of the Barbizon colony had been the Ganne Inn, later to be joined by the Hôtel Siron and the Villa des Artistes. The popularity of Pont-Aven was also sustained by three inns, renowned for

⁶³ BLACKBURN & CALDECOTT, 1880, p.130

⁶⁴ Quotation from Low, W., *Chronicle of Friendships, 1873-1900*, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1908, cited in LÜBBREN, 2001, p.169. See also JACOBS, 1985, p.29

their cheap and generous hospitality. The Pension Gloanec, for instance was the cheapest.

Blackburn wrote that it was,

... the true bohemian home at Pont-Aven, where living is even more moderate than at the inns... The cost of living, board and lodging, at the Pension Gloanec, including two good meals a day with cider is sixty francs a month!⁶⁵

In each place the characteristics of the various inns appears to have become almost uniform in catering to the artist market. The resemblance between the inns of Barbizon and Pont-Aven is remarked on by most writers on the subject, both nineteenth-century and modern. François Coppée, for example, described one of the inns in Pont-Aven in 1881 saying, ‘les murs de la salle à manger sont ornés, comme à Marlotte ou à Barbizon, d’esquisses faites de chic...’⁶⁶ The dining room at the Hôtel des Voyageurs which lodged a number of American artists, has been described in a similar way; as has the inn at Cernay-la-Ville, a village close to Paris where Pelouse, his peers and his followers worked.⁶⁷ Subsidiary businesses such as shops selling artists’ supplies were also established and further facilitated the growth of art tourism. Another essential characteristic of each colony was its proximity to the environment which the artists came to paint. For the *plein air* painters who wanted to study the natural landscape, the most appropriate accommodation was likely to be situated in a rural village. Particularly as it became more fashionable to depict the humanised landscape, it was inevitable that the villages themselves would become a subject of their work.

It is evident that few French artists depicted the villages directly as the artist colonies that they were. Most of the existing portraits of artists in colonies are either photographs or painted by foreigners. That is not to say, however, that the perceived sense of community conveyed in village landscapes was unaffected by the artists’ own experiences staying there as part of a colony. While the aim of colonists may have been to assimilate themselves as

⁶⁵ BLACKBURN & CALDECOTT, 1880, p.130

⁶⁶ Coppée, F., *Contes en prose*, A. Lamerre, Paris, 1880, cited in CARIOU, 1999, p.27

⁶⁷ See LÜBBREN, 2001, p.167; and JACOBS, 1985, p.99

closely as possible to the lives of the villagers, their status was primarily that of voluntary observer rather than an entrenched peasant inhabitant. Speaking generally, Lübbren discusses artist colonies as a form of social entity. Because the artists' participation in the community was completely voluntary, she argues that rural artist colonies were placed, 'within modern forms of bourgeois sociability.'⁶⁸ The idea is a striking contrast to Tombs's description of native village populations as places where relationships were largely involuntary but tied to the location by families and immobility.⁶⁹ The picturesque harmony depicted in many paintings of rural communities may indeed be more comparable to the carefree life of the artist colony. Sheltered from the harsher realities of peasant subsistence and ingrained parochial values, it is easy to see how most negative aspects of village life escaped the painters' brushes.

The 'truth' of the experience conveyed in such works arguably revealed itself more in the manner in which the images were painted rather than in the immediate subject matter. The precedent set by the Barbizon group in the early nineteenth century had created a model for the life of the landscape artist, which by the Third Republic many were trying to emulate. Liberated from the academic strictures of the art establishment as well as the responsibilities of urban life, artist colonies offered artists freedom in their work and also fresh inspiration. The artist colony gave younger artists the opportunity to make the acquaintance of their older mentors in an informal context. With such a mixture of artists all in one place, ideas and expertise were able to circulate and develop in a way that was quite different to the simple one-way flow of knowledge from teacher to student. Although the notion of artistic sociability associated with artist colonies was itself somewhat idealised, it is true that it contributed to the character of the art produced there. MacQuoid, for example, described the

⁶⁸ LÜBBREN, 2001, p.17

⁶⁹ See TOMBS, 1996, pp.233-234

artists in Pont-Aven as a 'happy band of brothers.'⁷⁰ It seems from Paul Gauguin's accounts of life in the village, however, that the fervent rivalries and differences in opinion contributed as much as his friendships to his artistic development.⁷¹ More than simply a response to the visual aspect of the village, the paintings emanating from these communities were a culmination of the complex dynamics of social interaction within the colony.

The attraction of rural artist colonies is easily understood. The prospect of staying in a specific location for a prolonged period of time would have created a sense of familiarity between the artist and his subject matter. In part a collective vacation, it would have constituted a convivial environment in which to paint over the summer months. While the colony may have constituted an escape from the physical urban environment, however, in social terms many colonies represented a subset of the Parisian bourgeoisie, or at least the Parisian art world. The influence of peers and the circulation of ideas meant that the development of a common iconography was inevitable. Having brought with them many urban preconceptions of rural life, the resultant works often reinforced and refined the stereotypes, rather than dispelled them. Particularly where artists were keen not to depict their rural communities as the tourist colonies they were, it is unsurprising that representations of these villages became stereotyped and superficial. From the perspective of the landscapist it could be suggested that a more genuine aspect of each village's individual character emerged in the development of his painting. His experience of the community would have been shaped by the unique combination of artists who went there, and thus manifested itself in the nuances of style and perspective which emerged in his art.

⁷⁰ MacQUOID, 1877, p.92

⁷¹ e.g. Gauguin, letter to Vincent Van Gogh, 25 July 1888, transcribed in RIJKSMUSEUM, 1983, letter 30, p.213. See also THOMSON, B., 2005, pp.27-29; and REWALD, 1980, p.537

The Breton Village and Pont-Aven

Paintings of Brittany were highly popular during the period discussed in this thesis. The attraction of the region has already been established, in part, with respect to the trends in tourism and the growing taste for escapism. Its distance and distinction from the rest of France played a significant role. As a peninsula jutting out into the Atlantic, Brittany's isolated situation at the north-western extremity of France was peripheral both to the national territory and culture. Poor accessibility only contributed to the area's detachment. Having developed more or less independently from the rest of the nation, Breton traditions were particularly distinctive. Combined with its remote and unfamiliar landscape, the scope for inspiration and intrigue was ample. The increasing profusion of paintings of Brittany inevitably led to a coherent iconography, which in effect encapsulated contemporary perceptions of that specific region and its communities. The purpose of this case study will be to trace the evolution of the Breton motif and to identify the role of the village within it. First, it will isolate the main characteristics most commonly associated with the region, attempting to explain their relevance to the place itself and to the urban art market. Then to finish, the study will consider the manner in which artists depicted Pont-Aven, with particular focus on the works of Paul Gauguin.

The Breton motif

Breton imagery developed continually throughout the nineteenth century. Both art and literature consistently recognised the region's distinct and individualistic character and contributed to its publicity. By the Third Republic the region had inspired a rich and well-established iconography. The use of the term '*la Bretagne bretonnante*' by writers such as MacQuoid in 1877, for example, indicates the pervading presence of the Breton archetype,

even to a foreign writer.⁷² As attitudes changed towards the province, however, so did the imagery associated with it. From Brittany's association with the anti-republican Chouan revolt during the French Revolution, to the realisation of the region as a tourist destination, the interpretation of the Breton landscape followed a path of perpetual evolution. It is important, therefore, to consider the general motif and the contextual influences which shaped it, as well as the role of the Breton community within it. During the period of 1870-1890 there appears to have been an evident progression in the emphasis of Breton landscapes as they fluctuated between the savage, the primitive and the pious.⁷³

The Breton landscape itself, and its climate, were fundamental in encouraging certain preconceptions. The Breton coast, which MacQuoid described, 'with its cruel rocks, jagged and torn by the frightful violence of the sea...' ⁷⁴ was a popular motif. Many artists were inspired by its dramatic cliffs and tales of shipwrecks. Moreover, the harsh environment brought with it implications regarding the character of the people who lived there.⁷⁵ The paintings by Daubigny of the Breton coast from the late 1860s and early 1870s, for example, juxtapose the presence of man against the hostility of the natural landscape.⁷⁶ Works such as his *Entrée de Kérity*, 1871 (fig.89), accentuate the precariousness of the community, as the resilience of the village and its inhabitants conflicts against the looming clouds and unforgiving rocks. Movements such as Charles Cottet's *Bande Noire*, which became active later in the 1890s, also focused on the perils of the sea through the figurative representation of fishing communities. Inland, the stretches of uncultivated moor-lands and the extreme weather conditions produced by the Atlantic also contributed to the image of Brittany as bleak and *sauvage*. This effect is evident in Monet's *Belle-Ile en Mer*, 1886 (fig.90). In a

⁷² MacQUOID, 1877, p.4

⁷³ For alternative discussion see also Herbert, R., "Peasants and 'Primitivism'" in HERBERT, 2002, pp.49-65 at 56-58

⁷⁴ MacQUOID, 1877, p.6

⁷⁵ See THOMSON, B., 2005, pp.39-40

⁷⁶ See HELLEBRANTH, 1976, nos. 570-587

similar manner to Daubigny's depiction of Kérimy, the insertion of a human presence emphasises the starkness of the setting. Pictorially this suggestion of a village gives meaning to the rest of the rather abstract composition, but in reference to the location it also accentuates the characteristic remoteness. There are no human figures, simply the faint outline of a few buildings. Set on the horizon of this sparse terrain and seen through the driving rain, man's presence appears insignificant in the face of untamed nature, a distinct contrast to the rural civility of Vetheuil.

The perception of Brittany as wild and savage was also reflected in depictions of Breton culture. Honoré de Balzac's literary portrayal of romanticist savagery in *Les Chouans*, in 1829, is a well-known example. He characterised Brittany as a region 'surrounded by enlightenment whose beneficent warmth never penetrates it.'⁷⁷ As demonstrated by Évariste-Vital Luminais's paintings the notion of the rugged Chouan was effective in creating visual intrigue. References to the region's more ancient past also played an active role in evoking the idea of the primitive and uncivilised. The popular interest in regional histories, common throughout the nineteenth century, had raised awareness of Brittany's Celtic roots. During the Third Republic the distinction of Breton culture from the Gallic heritage of the rest of France was still strongly apparent, and often served as evidence of Brittany's lack of civilisation. The strange Druidic structures which adorned the region reinforced such notions, implying a rather exotic dimension to the history of the landscape. For the bourgeois viewer, the uncertainty surrounding the mysterious menhirs and *allées couvertes* could evoke no end of imaginative scenarios. MacQuoid, for example, wrote of her conviction that, 'these stones have witnessed fearful rites in which probably demons have been worshipped and called on to consecrate the tombs, if they are tombs, of departed chiefs honoured by these colossal memorials.'⁷⁸ Paintings such as Lansyer's *Lande de Tréota*, 1885 (fig.91), relied on

⁷⁷ Balzac, H.de, *Les Chouans*, Seuil, Paris, 1966, cited by LEHNING, 1995, p.19

⁷⁸ MacQUOID, 1877, p.1

such responses; the connotations of the menhir's past casting its effect over the whole scene. Even where such remains were not expressly featured, their mystical appeal was to permeate the landscape, both in paintings and in reality. MacQuoid, for example, continued her description in saying, 'Every barren plain bears either visibly or beneath its brown soil, some mysterious token of an epoch before history began...'⁷⁹

The role assumed by Breton landscape paintings was very different to that of paintings of 'civilised' France. Works depicting the Forest of Fontainebleau, for example, conveyed it as a complementary garden to Paris that the bourgeoisie might identify with through visiting the area. In contrast to this close and familiar environment, however, Brittany was emphatically distant and foreign, particularly before the expansion of the railways. Images of Breton savagery would have seemed too remote to appear overly intimidating, but instead could evoke excitement and intrigue. In many ways, these 'anti-picturesque' works which concentrated on the uncivilised and primitive nature of the region were symptomatic of rather condescending and colonialist attitudes. It is clear, however, that as the region opened up to visitors and became more associated with the rest of the nation, attitudes towards it gradually softened.

The expansion of the railways meant that by 1865 it was possible to travel from Paris to Quimperlé, Quimper and Brest, (all in the extreme west of Brittany) within a day. Brittany was no longer inaccessible nor impervious and was beginning to be associated more with pleasurable experiences. The English travel writer Thomas Hutchinson, wrote from his own experience of the region,

⁷⁹ MacQUOID, 1877, p.1

Looking at it in this bright sunshine and balmy air, it seems a very mild kind of savagery indeed. As if nature, in designing it, had held back the stern rigour of her pencil, and thus painted as little as possible of roughness on the fair face of *la belle France*.⁸⁰

The gradual change in attitudes within artistic imagery is evident in Edmond Duranty's review of the Salon of 1877, where he wrote disapprovingly regarding all the 'dark' Breton landscapes. He congratulated Ségé on being the only artist to depict the region in sunlight to reveal, 'Une Bretagne qui est un pays doué d'un caractère à part.' In doing so, the critic contradicted the relevancy of the standard sombre Breton atmosphere, adding that the other paintings of Brittany 'n'ont point de physionomie spéciale.'⁸¹

Ségé's *La vallée de Ploukermeur*, c.1883 (fig.92), is particularly demonstrative of the increasingly civilised nature of the Breton picturesque ideal. The effect of this view of the moors of the Mont d'Arrée is rather 'bucolic', with the sporadic vegetation and occasional rocky outcrops illuminated by the sun. The horses which animate the scene are immediately suggestive of a more civilised nature – socialising in groups as a mare suckles her foal. The primitive substance of the landscape is tempered, by the implication that it may be tamed and domesticated. As in many paintings, the presence of a village is also constructive in creating this 'civilising' effect. Though proportionally small in the composition, the canvas is a large one and the central positioning of the village's blue silhouette emphasises its influence over the scene. A study by Bernier for *La lande près de la carrière pouliche et poulain* (fig.93) employs very similar iconography. The bleak grey skies and wild vegetation are entirely offset by the cows leading into the distance, as well as the domestic foreground view of a young girl sitting on the ground watching a horse and foal. In addition to the domesticated livestock, a stone wall and grassy path indicate that the wild landscape has been constrained by man. The compositional diagonals of all of these features point toward the steeple

⁸⁰ HUTCHINSON, 1876, p.86

⁸¹ DURANTY, 1877, p.60

protruding from the distant horizon, emphasising again the adhesion of the entire scene to the central influence of the community.

The influence of the State would also have been a major factor in encouraging the ‘civilising’ of Breton iconography. Louis Le Camus’s *L’Anse Saint Laurent*, 1883 (fig.94), is a rather extreme example. Commissioned by the State for the entrance hall of the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Quimper, the artist adopted an appropriately academic but notably neo-classical approach. Presented as a ‘pastoral’ idyll, the image appears to lack any strong sense of Breton character. Ségé and Bernier especially were State and Salon favourites and their works were typical of the nationalist ideal. Lafenestre, later an inspector for the *Ministre des Beaux-Arts*, described both artists’ paintings in his review of the 1873 Salon: ‘... MM. Bernier et Ségé, qui célèbrent toujours la beauté rustique de la Bretagne, l’un sous son aspect intime et familial, l’autre dans ses splendeurs panoramiques.’⁸² Paintings like Bernier’s tranquil *sous-bois* scenes with dutiful peasants tending docile livestock were far more consistent with Republicanism than ideas of an uncivilised and unproductive wilderness. Towards the end of the 1880s the typical Breton landscape appears to have undergone a transformation from the savage and desolate *landes*, to a terrain which was securely inhabited and richly cultivated. Fernand Quignon’s *Le blé noir*, 1889 (fig.95), is an especially idyllic demonstration. The village next to this lush field of a typically Breton crop depicts a content community and a fertile terrain.

It is true that during this time the physical landscape was undergoing significant change. The increase in communications was instrumental in assimilating Brittany to the rest of the nation. With particular effect to the rural landscape, rails and roads gave the peasant population of Brittany access to modern markets, technology and fertilisers. Extensive stretches of wasteland were drained and cultivated and the product then exported on train or

⁸² LAFENESTRE, 1873, p.58

from the many Breton ports.⁸³ While paintings such as Quignon's with its bountiful fields might have depicted the results of modernisation, however, in most Breton landscapes any allusion to modernity was inadvertent. Despite the gradual decline in the concept of Breton savagery, the perception of Brittany as archaic was still central amid a more attractive notion of primitivism. The English travel writer Philip de Quetteville, for instance, described the Breton population as, 'more than a century behind the corresponding class of labourer in our own country'. He explained that this made Brittany 'acceptable to antiquarian taste.'⁸⁴ Perceived in this more amenable light, the region represented to many a living antique which was to be cherished and preserved. Authors such as De Quetteville decried the effects of modernisation and centralisation which he said would, 'destroy the primitive simplicity of the natives of Brittany.'⁸⁵

Regional costumes were particularly effective in connoting the historical origins and active traditions of the area. Images of the Chouan-type male, however, with his long hair and wide-brimmed black hat gave way more and more to the pretty young Bretonne in her striking white coiffe. The contrast is resounding in comparing paintings such as Luminais's *Le pâtre de Kerlaz*, 1857 (fig.96), with Benjamin Newman's 1887 Salon painting *Lunch, Bretagne* (fig.97) with its rather affected group of little girls and a boy sitting diligently in front of a cluster of thatched cottages. The emphasis was no-longer on provincial separatism but on the generic submissiveness of the Breton inhabitants. In addition, rather than referring to the region's Celtic and Druidic past, many of such animated and inhabited landscapes now alluded to a fervent Christian tradition. This in turn contributed to the assertion of the Breton identity as a specific region and as a set of identifiable communities. Local costume was an integral part of this imagery and was coveted by the clergy. As described by LeBras, 'Jusqu'au début du siècle, le costume, particulièrement la coiffe, a distingué les paroisses : le

⁸³ See COWE, 2001, pp.26-29

⁸⁴ De QUETTEVILLE, 1870, pp.6 and 9

⁸⁵ De QUETTEVILLE, 1870, pp.9, 498, and 517

clergé, les religieuses ont encouragé l'industrie délicate des repasseuses, auxiliaires utiles dans la défense contre l'invasion des modes urbaines.⁸⁶ The association between Breton costume and religion was especially vivid in paintings of *Pardons* – the pilgrimages to neighbouring parishes which were popular throughout rural Brittany. These were considered an important event, and for the artist would have presented a vivid subject matter – large crowds of Breton folk dressed in their most formal traditional costume and displaying a mass of god-fearing conformity. Indeed, they were a popular theme, both for their striking visual appeal and their spiritual symbolism. Dagnan-Bouveret's paintings are one example; however, Jules Breton is another artist who also exploited such subject matter several times.

In landscape paintings, granite calvaries and churches also appeared frequently. In Alexandre Defaux's *En Bretagne* (fig.98), for example, the church is the singular and dominant identifying feature. Its belfry and facade are illuminated and the departing congregation made tiny in proportion. The *curé*, at the top of the steps outside his house, is raised above them as if in a pulpit. Equally, Jacques Guiaud's painting of *Le calvaire de Tronoën* (fig.99) reveals a particularly 'sublime' interpretation of the Breton landscape. The exceptional religious zeal of the Breton people, and the peculiarity of the characteristic monuments, meant that the depiction of Breton religious iconography was particularly resonant. Increasingly, the region was becoming synonymous with piety.

The current political contentions regarding religion would also have been influential in promoting the pious connotations of Breton iconography, even more than villages of other regions. Since the Chouan rebellion, Brittany had been renowned for its ardent Catholicism. An equal sense of fervour re-surfaced amid the debate over secularisation, with Breton priests and rural communities offering some of the most resolute opposition. McMillan's study of the conflict in Brittany, for example, identifies the archdiocese of Rennes as,

⁸⁶ LeBRAS, 1976, p.117

‘unquestionably one of the hottest spots in the French culture war,’ during the 1890s.⁸⁷ It appears that in many cases in Brittany Catholic protest exceeded verbal dissidence and became physically violent.⁸⁸ In contrast to the Chouans, however, the vehemence of the Catholic resistance during the Third Republic only strengthened perceptions of the region’s devoutness and virtue. Nonetheless, it was not simply religious sympathy which was responsible for the popularity of this pious imagery. It was more the general implication of change, with regard to all the historical and cultural values associated with the Breton church, which was at the root of the iconography. The archaism expressed by the region’s religiosity was emphatic and increasingly valued by the urban bourgeoisie as an antithetic remedy to their own modern environment.

There had always been an element of primitive spirituality in paintings of Brittany, evident in the implied mysticism of Druid remains and pagan rituals, gradually superseded by Christian iconography. However, the distinction between pagan primitivism and Breton Catholicism was not always clearly defined. This is reflected in paintings such as Lansyer’s *Le menhir de Kergueler*, 1885 (fig.100), where the spire pointing up above the trees in the background echoes the pointed shape of the menhir in the foreground. Such effects are echoed in MacQuoid’s description of Breton spiritualism, ‘The cross now surmounts the menhir, and the statue of the virgin is rucked over the fountain of remote date, where once the Korrigan reigned supreme.’⁸⁹ The type of Christianity which permeated these landscapes was clearly highly primitive. In essence, this primitive piety was representative of the fundamental roots of moral civilisation, the antithesis of corrupt modernity. To the bourgeois viewer it could suggest the basis of an idealised society; a model for his own moral and social standards.

⁸⁷ See McMillan, J., “‘Priest hits girl’: on the front line in the ‘war of the Frances’” in CLARK and KAISER (Eds.), 2003, pp.77-101 at 91

⁸⁸ See McMillan, J., “‘Priest hits girl’: on the front line in the ‘war of the Frances’” in CLARK and KAISER (Eds.), 2003, pp.77-101 at 91-98

⁸⁹ MacQUOID, 1877, p.1

The iconography used to portray Brittany's distinctive identity had adapted significantly in response to the art market of the Third Republic. As well as depicting the more striking aspects of the region and its culture, it also reflected shifting attitudes and the changing relationship of the urban bourgeoisie with this remote province. The inhospitable nature of the harsh Breton landscape became increasingly accommodating to the notion of human society and to bourgeois ideals. The dominant savagery of the physical landscape was gradually 'civilised' by the developing idealisation of the long-established Breton community. Although based substantially on the traditions of Christian piety, it was essentially the notion of the archaic which was the overriding theme. 'Savage' or 'civilised', the region had consistently been perceived as a living relic from the past.⁹⁰ With the growing threat of modernisation, attitudes had become admiring, protective and nostalgic. Brittany was now revered for its primitivism rather than derided. The Breton motif had grown to represent an ideal way of life which in itself was perceived as sacred.

Paul Gauguin and Pont-Aven

For many artists, the search for a Breton ideal brought them to Pont-Aven in the south-western area of Cornuaille. The substantial artist colony which developed there over the course of the 1870s and 80s was responsible for a significant proportion of the paintings emanating from Brittany during this period, particularly those of villages. A small port with a fertile agricultural hinterland, it is situated at the top of a winding estuary where the River Aven meets the sea. For those seeking the true *Bretagne bretonnante* Pont-Aven certainly seems to have fulfilled many of the criteria. Several writers described the place as summing

⁹⁰ See THERSIQUEL et al, 1986, p.6

up everything desired of Brittany.⁹¹ The journalist H. Vernoy, as one example, neatly summarised the identifying elements of Breton iconography in his description of the village.

On ne saurait trouver nulle part ailleurs une réunion plus complète de tous les traits caractéristiques qui composent la physionomie si pittoresque de notre vieille et chère Bretagne. Les costumes, les mœurs, les habitations, les meubles, les moulins, les églises, les calvaires, tout y a conservé son cachet des anciens temps.⁹²

The variety of natural landscape, coupled with the Breton village community, offered ample subject matter for painters. Considering how many paintings of Brittany originated in Pont-Aven, however, it is difficult to discern to what extent the village happened to coincide with the Breton ideal, or if it was the source of its inspiration. It is important to consider, therefore, the reciprocal relationship between paintings of Pont-Aven and the different aspects of Breton iconography. With the large number of artists working in such a concentrated area, the similarities and variations in artistic approach allow a thorough insight into the nuances of the motif and the ideals of individual artists. Using comparisons with works by other artists, the present analysis will focus on the works of Gauguin, whose numerous depictions of the area form a rich and cohesive motif.

Many artists came to Pont-Aven with the intention of witnessing the typically backward and remote Breton village. However, no such place could ever support a large artist colony, nor would artists have been comfortable staying there. Many paradoxes existed between the ideal experience of the bourgeois in the country and the visual ideal represented in the paintings: multifunctional town and agricultural village; modern and old; traditional and changing; pious and savage. As the place adapted to change, an evolution in the localised imagery was also inevitable. Whereas in reality Pont-Aven was to some extent a compromise between

⁹¹ e.g. BERTALL, 1886, p.2; and G.Floride, 1888, cited in QUÉINEC, 1983, p.97

⁹² VERNROY, 1884, *passim*

Breton savagery and the modern French world, what is depicted in paintings and written accounts of the area represents many different points between the two.

In the light of such ambiguity, Gauguin's paintings are particularly interesting. His strong personal and artistic relationship with Paris always seems to have been in conflict with his own ideals. Particularly as his aesthetic ideology developed, towards the end of the 1880s, he began to represent the archetypal case of the nostalgic Parisian seeking the antithetical alternative to the life and society of the modern city. Robert Herbert has described it as 'Gauguin's search for identity, for the lost paradise of pre-industrial man'.⁹³ Gauguin wrote in a letter to Schuffenecker, 'J'aime la Bretagne, j'y trouve le sauvage, le primitif. Quand mes sabots résonnent sur le sol de granit, j'entends le ton sourd, mat et puissant que je cherche en peinture.'⁹⁴ His paintings of Pont-Aven are evident of a developing counter-reaction which eventually found resolve in the aspects of Breton culture felt to symbolise the converse of the deficiencies of 'civilised' France. In this, ironically, his identity as a Parisian was all the more evident. Although stylistically a fervent non-conformist, he was still keen to find acceptance in the Paris art world. In 1889, for instance, unable to realise a pavilion at the Exposition Universelle, he and his followers mounted an unsuccessful exhibition at the Café Volpini in Paris, calling themselves the 'Groupe Impressioniste et Synthétiste'.⁹⁵ Whether motivated by the market or simply reacting to his own perceptions of Brittany, the imagery relied on in his works was increasingly demonstrative of popular urban stereotypes.

In his animated landscapes his perception of Breton people in terms of stereotypes is particularly clear. The young Breton in his blue tunic and black hat, as well as the Bretonne in her distinctive Pont-Aven coiffe, who appear in *Le petit berger breton*, 1888 (fig.101), are

⁹³ Herbert, R., "City vs. Country: The Rural Image in French Painting from Millet to Gauguin" in HERBERT, 2002, pp.23-48 at 46

⁹⁴ Gauguin, letter to Schuffenecker, February 1888, transcribed in MERLHÈS, 1984, letter 141, p.172

⁹⁵ See JACOBS, 1985, p.37; JAWORSKA, 1972, pp.75-84; and Frèches-Thory, C., "Brittany, 1886-1890" in BRETTELL et al, 1988, pp.52-57 at 52-53

not depicted as individuals but rather as generic male and female representatives of the Breton race. The same two figures appear several times in other paintings of Pont-Aven, either alone or together, as in *Vue sur Pont-Aven prise de Lézaven* and *Berger et bergère dans le pré*, both painted in 1888 (fig.102 and 103). As in many paintings, the featuring of these people in traditional dress would have distanced the imagery from any ideas of encroaching modernity. This was a common aspect of paintings of the Pont-Aven area. Otto Weber's *Retour de l'église, scène bretonne*, c.1863-1864 (fig.104), is an early example. Whereas Weber's peasants, rather like Camille Bernier's, show a pretty and rather genteel conformity, those of Gauguin seem far more simple and crude.⁹⁶ In *Le petit berger Breton*, for instance, the dress of both figures is very basic, with no ornate embroidery or coloration. The Bretonne is in a particularly unflattering pose, with her rear end sticking up in the air towards her companion, who in turn looks as though he could be cleaning his ear. Here his figures reflect the 'savagery' he saw in Brittany, and even in paintings where they appear more attractive it is always the sense of the primitive which prevails in their simplistic portrayal.

Often such figures are placed in the foreground to frame the landscape behind, so that, particularly where the village is featured, their demeanour tacitly implicates the entire community. Although this portrayal of Breton primitivism can be interpreted as the view of a condescending bourgeois, the indifference of the figures and therefore the artist, to the viewer, gives them an air of independence from the French civilised world. In works such as *Bretonnes et veau*, 1888 (fig.105), for example, the two Bretonnes have their backs turned to the viewer, their stance creating a division between the 'French' viewer and the content of the work. For Gauguin, the 'savage and primitive' aspects of Breton culture were not negative factors; they represented the distanced simplicity he sought in his own life. His paintings of Brittany express his sentiments in a variety of ways, becoming particularly decisive as his

⁹⁶ See Frèches-Thory, C., "Brittany, 1886-1890" in BRETTELL et al, 1988, pp.52-57 at 55

style developed. This quest would eventually take him to Tahiti in 1891, when the gulf between his primitive ideal and the ‘civilised’ reality of contemporary Brittany became too wide. He explained in a letter to his fellow artist Émile Bernard from June that year, ‘Je partirai là-bas et je vivrai un homme retiré du monde soi-disant civilisé pour ne fréquenter que les soi-disant sauvages.’⁹⁷

In contrast to the impression given by Gauguin’s paintings, Pont-Aven was in fact rather more ‘French’ and ‘civilised’ than many other Breton villages. Its culture and landscape were a world apart from Balzac’s wild and barbaric Brittany. In commenting on the village both Valentine Vattier d’Ambroyse and MacQuoid were of the opinion that the more romantic poetry of Auguste Brizeux was far more apt, giving, according to the latter, ‘the most realistic as well as most poetic pictures of the manners and customs of his countrymen.’⁹⁸ In reality Pont-Aven was probably more ‘French’ and modern than they would have wanted to admit. In Michel Thersiquel et al’s *Mémoire de Pont-Aven*, describing the village at the end of the nineteenth century, they state that, ‘On y faisait, à l’inverse des villages voisins, large usage du français.’⁹⁹ In addition, it was inevitable that the trends and fashions of the visiting Parisians would have infiltrated those of the local people. Émile Bernard appears to have been one of the few artists comfortable with the incorporation of modern urban influence within his paintings of Breton subjects. His *Les bretonnes dans la prairie verte*, 1888 (fig.106), for example, features two women clothed in contemporary fashion to the top left. Below, two young girls stand side by side, the feathered hat and knee-length white coat of one countered against the large coiffe and corseted black dress of the other. Fred Orton and Griselda Pollock suggest these figures might be tourists, but they could equally be Bretonnes in modern dress.¹⁰⁰ Paintings such as Bernard’s *Marché à Pont-*

⁹⁷ Gauguin, letter to Bernard, June 1890, transcribed in MALINGUE, 1946, letter CV, pp.191-192

⁹⁸ MacQUOID, 1877, p.9; and VATTIER D’AMBROYSE, 1892

⁹⁹ THERSIQUEL et al, 1986, p.8

¹⁰⁰ ORTON & POLLOCK, 1996, p.74

Aven, 1888 (fig.107), also show Pont-Aven as a thriving market place – a concept which rather contradicts many other paintings of the time. Perceptions varied even between stylistic schools, as seen in comparing these paintings of Bernard's against Gauguin's.

Neither visual nor textual interpretations of Pont-Aven offer any agreement or certainty as to the true character of the place. Even in modern texts definitions are fairly confused. An example is the Pont-Aven School of Art website which states, 'Pont-Aven is a village in size, a town in spirit, and a city in pride.'¹⁰¹ In nineteenth-century texts the trend appears to have changed from the category of 'village' to that of 'town' as time progressed towards the 1890s, however, this was in no way a set precedent. While MacQuoid described it as a 'charming little town' in 1877, for example, Vernoy called it 'un petit village' in 1884.¹⁰² In this chapter Pont-Aven will be referred to as a village as it is focusing on cases where it was depicted as such. In paintings too, views were manipulated to suit the artist. Adjacent Trémalo, which at the most could be described as a hamlet with a church, was used by artists such as Boudier and Weber to portray a village setting. Early paintings of Pont-Aven, on the other hand, such as Lansyer's *Pont-Aven* from 1867 (fig.108) and the paintings of Pelouse tended to select mill scenes and sous-bois from the village, so that the place was barely represented as a village at all. Not dissimilar, Gauguin's peripheral views of Pont-Aven show groups of houses which are far more approximate to the concept of a small village or even a disparate hamlet.

One of Gauguin's earliest portrayals of Pont-Aven, *Le champ Derout Lollichon*, 1886 (fig.109), is a good example. With the composition dominated by the central grouping of the rustic thatched cottages and the church spire as an apex, surrounded by grazing cattle, it is strongly reminiscent of the type of stereotypical village motif being discussed in this thesis.

¹⁰¹ www.pontavensa.org/walkthru/village.htm

¹⁰² MacQUOID, 1877, p.250; and VERNROY, 1884, p.426

Only the distant slate roofs protruding from the valley to the left give any suggestion that the village is in fact larger, not so self-contained and not necessarily as rustic as first impressions might predict. Gauguin painted many views from this field, often with the same effect. By 1888, as his work developed, his treatment and perception of his motifs was becoming more and more simplified and decisive. Just as he repeated his Breton figures there was also repetition in the way he depicted the houses of Pont-Aven. In developing his own Pont-Aven motif there was an element of continuity in giving the viewer familiarity with the location. The self-contained views with the spire at the centre, as in this painting of the Derout Lollichon field, were one example. He did, however, depict Pont-Aven in other ways.

Paintings such as *Le petit berger Breton* and others such as *Effet de neige*, 1888 (fig.110), show houses set into the valley so that practically all that is seen are the emerging roofs. They appear small and squat; the high horizons and hostile terrain dominate the scene. Belinda Thomson suggests that Gauguin's arrival in winter in early 1888 made him more aware of the harshness of the landscape.¹⁰³ Certainly, in these paintings the dominance of the sparse winter landscape resonates through the entire composition enveloping the houses so that they appear even more rustic and rudimentary. Gauguin's downward view on the small group of houses sunken into the valley creates a belittling effect, almost comparable to the desolate communities portrayed in Daubigny and Monet's Breton landscapes. The effect is added to by the lack of church spire or *clocher*, which removes any sense of an enduring structured community. In this context the size and character of the location implied by the composition would suggest that Pont-Aven was barely larger than a hamlet. And even where he features the spire, it still appears smaller than a town with its singular, central, dominating presence.

¹⁰³ THOMSON, B., 1987, p.57

The actual permanent population over the course of this period had risen from 1131 in 1872, to 1589 in 1891.¹⁰⁴ From the statistics therefore, it is clear that Pont-Aven was on the borderline between being a town or a village rather than the village/hamlet that was depicted in most of Gauguin's paintings, particularly when one considers the large transitory population there must have been. Besides the tourist aspect, there was also much commercial activity, such as the busy markets and fairs which took place each week. There was also a large number of flour mills which lined the rapid waters of the Aven just before it plunged into the estuary. Many artists, an example is Lansyer, appear to have carefully selected the mills they painted to look quite solitary and remote. Gauguin did this too in his *Les lavandières de Pont-Aven*, 1886 (fig.111). The manipulation of the viewpoint is clearly evident when the picture is compared to Gaston Rouillet's *Port de Pont-Aven*, c.1878 (fig.112), showing the same site but looking in the opposite direction. Gauguin's selectivity in adapting his subject matter to fit a particular type of imagery is quite evident. The port too, which is more obvious in Rouillet's painting, combined with the mills and the markets, made Pont-Aven a very prosperous and multifunctional community. Thersiquel et al describe it as an almost industrial 'bourg', saying,

Peu à peu, les marchands, les capitaines, les meuniers forment une véritable bourgeoisie et, au long du XIXème siècle, le bourg lui même – les passants notent – prend l'allure urbaine...¹⁰⁵

It is in the paintings of the port that the divergence between perceptions becomes most clear. A popular subject, it appeared in a range of pictures. This may partly have been due to its accessibility to artists staying in the village but it was also one of the most important facets of Pont-Aven, both visually and in terms of the village's prosperity. It served of course as a fishing port, an activity which was complemented by the large amount of salmon fishing

¹⁰⁴ SOCIÉTÉ ARCHÉOLOGIQUE du FINISTÈRE, 1972, pp.873-874

¹⁰⁵ THERSIQUEL et al, 1986, p8

which went on in the river. Over the course of the nineteenth century, however, its function as a dock for cargo boats became increasingly important. The channel up the estuary was deepened mid-century to allow larger boats to reach Pont-Aven, and the quay on the right bank was extended. Writers such as Vattier d'Ambroyse in 1892 spoke of its advantageous situation as a port being situated in an area of relatively advanced agriculture bringing, 'un certain trafic, en cidre, bois, pierre, grains, beurre, légumes, farines....' MacQuoid also noted a large exportation of potatoes to England in 1877.¹⁰⁶ According to Henri le Corre the percentage of exports/imports had risen from 6% in 1842 to 29% in 1885, with 259 ships docking during that year.¹⁰⁷ More extensive statistics can be found in Bertrand Quéinec's analysis of Pont-Aven; however, the above is sufficient in establishing a general idea of what the port was like at this time.¹⁰⁸

Roulet's painting, while quite active, depicts the port as a small fishing harbour; not necessarily village-like but typically provincial, with its fairly rustic surroundings, small boats and hardy fishermen. The American William Picknell's *The Port of Pont-Aven* (fig.113), painted a year later in 1879, in contrast makes Pont-Aven appear much larger. The quay, which extends way beyond the houses to the left, and the large sailing ship that dominates the picture, convey far more the sense of the village's commercial importance beyond the immediate location. While the composition features few houses, the church spire glistening between the poplars to the right, the haze of smoking chimneys, and the quay's extension beyond the edge of the painting, would all suggest a larger established community, arguably to be interpreted as a small town and not a village. Maxime Maufra's much later *Vue du port de Pont-Aven*, 1890 (fig.114), a perspective taken from a similar distance to Picknell's painting, is again very different. With the composition taken up mostly by the large coloured blocks of the empty hillside and still water, the boat on the mud flat appears isolated

¹⁰⁶ MacQUOID, 1877, p251

¹⁰⁷ Le CORRE, 1960, p.59

¹⁰⁸ QUÉINEC, 1983, pp.228-233

and the emphasis seems more on the inactivity of the place. Only the edge of the mill building and the subtly emerging church spire to the far left give any hint that a settlement exists there at all.

As is evident from Maufra's stylistic *cloisonné* treatment of his subject, he was one of the artists who followed and worked closely with Gauguin. His neglect of the built-up and functional side of the port is also similar to the way that Gauguin selected his views of the estuary. Denise Delouche states that '[Gauguin] a dédaigné les activités du port.'¹⁰⁹ While this is true to an extent, it is not to say that he did not paint the port at all. There are a number of views from 1886 and 1888 taken from the undeveloped left bank, mostly looking downhill through trees onto and across the water, for example *La baignade devant le port de Pont-Aven* (fig.115) from 1886.¹¹⁰ In experimenting with these vertiginous views and flattened perspectives his interest was clearly placed in the timeless natural forms of the sloping wooded terrain and the reflections in the water. Again, his paintings tend emphatically to quiet rusticity and sparse habitation. *Le port de Pont-Aven*, 1888 (fig.116), appears to be the largest concession he made to showing the functioning aspects of the port, with three houses on the quayside and some small fishing boats. This compositional grouping is for the most part self-contained, and similarly to his paintings of the village's periphery makes little reference to the rest of the Pont-Aven. The work is dominated instead by the rugged incline and the large rocks where it meets the water.

Fishing and sailing held their own significance in Breton imagery. The lack of such motifs in Gauguin's oeuvre shows that they did not fit in with his preconceived ideas of Pont-Aven as a typical Breton village. Instead he emphasised the rural nature of the area by placing it within an agricultural context, again using rather conventional concepts. The notion of the

¹⁰⁹ DELOUCHE, 1996, p.59

¹¹⁰ See WILDENSTEIN, 2002, cat.nos.221-224

productive working community suggested by a surrounding agricultural terrain, for instance, was a common aspect of the village motif and applies equally in the context of Gauguin's paintings. *Gardien de cochons*, 1888 (fig.117), for example, shows Pont-Aven surrounded by a patchwork of fields, fronted by a rather vacant looking Breton minding pigs. Other paintings of haymaking from 1888 and 1889 show the community working rather more constructively, for example, in *La fenaison*, 1888 (fig.118). The picture is not necessarily of hard toil but of optimistic productivity. The people are faceless, generic Bretons, symbols of a harmonious community.

Farming and agriculture in particular, represented a rather idyllic working environment in the eyes of many Parisians; some perhaps influenced by their own tourist experiences of rural life. The uncomplicated outdoors existence signified a welcome relief from their own urban drudgery. MacQuoid noted the '...almost idyllic charm that seems to hang about their lazy, happy, outdoor village life...' ¹¹¹ This idea is epitomised in *La ronde des bretonnes*, 1888 (fig.119), the golden hayfield which engulfs the lower half of the painting adding an aspect of rustic contentment to the scene which permeates the Breton community represented by the familiar granite spire and thatched roofs. Capped by the group of young Breton girls in traditional dress, the entire painting denotes rather a clichéd vision of Brittany. Belinda Thomson discusses this painting, arguing that such aspects, particularly the romanticism suggested by the dance which she argues harks back to druidic festivals, made the painting readily marketable. ¹¹² Certainly, his use of such conventional stereotypes clearly affirms his awareness of the market and his own identity as a Parisian within that market. It is his selection and manipulation of these stereotypes, however, which is the source of originality of many of his compositions and reveals an insight into his more personal ideals.

¹¹¹ MacQUOID, 1877, p.23

¹¹² THOMSON, B., 1987, p.60

Gauguin's work from the few years that he was in Brittany seems to experiment with the whole range of imagery and ideals which had been evolving over the past two decades; from the savage and primitive to the 'pastoral' and pious. Whereas his paintings from 1889 and 1890 of Le Pouldu, down the coast from Pont-Aven, tended to express a harsher more savage primitivism, those of Pont-Aven appear to have gravitated toward a more affected and pious ideal. Although the winter of 1888 appears to have introduced him to perceptions of Breton primitivism, the savage and remote nature of the landscape appears to have been lost with the onset of spring and summer. Apart from the lush countryside the village motif plays a large part in this, most notably where the church spire is included.

Comparing, for example, *Petit berger arrangeant son sabot*, 1888 (fig.120), to *Le petit berger Breton* where the format is very similar, the insertion of the very structured village-with-church-spire motif in the former immediately adds a more civilised element to the painting. Cropped into a symmetrical shape by the landscape which frames it, Pont-Aven represents the stereotypical Breton village as much as it does the specific location. He painted few internal views of the village, omitting the more individualistic aspects of the place. In concentrating on the external impression, the presence of the church spire was an essential part of the resulting effect. The familiar presence of the typically Breton steeple is visible in many of Gauguin's landscapes from around Pont-Aven. In *Vue sur Pont-Aven prise de Lézaven*, for example, the village, the lush hillside, and the two young idling Bretons in the foreground, create a rural idyll. The protruding church spire is arguably the most dominant feature and adds to the innocent idealism of the scene. Even standing alone above a horizon – as in *Berger et bergère dans le pré* where it emerges subtly between the trees – the church spire was sufficient to provide all the connotations required in suggesting the rest of the village's presence.

In the opinion of the young British travel writer G.H. Forbes, the church at Pont-Aven had ‘little of interest about it.’¹¹³ Its spire, however, played an important role in Pont-Aven imagery. Its granite belfry was particularly characteristic of Breton tradition. Bertall described it as ‘un clocher élégant flanqué de quatre petits clochetons à la façon bretonne.’¹¹⁴ Of course it also held connotations pertaining to the community and religion. The spire was incorporated into many paintings to represent all such aspects. Picknell and Maufra’s views of the port of Pont-Aven, for example, both make an emphatic insertion of the spire to signify the village’s presence and to indicate a sense of Christian wholesomeness. Very rarely was the church seen in its entirety, which allowed artists scope to manipulate the scale. In reality the spire does not seem nearly as large nor imposing as it appears in many of the paintings (see fig.121). Furthermore, it is not nearly as universally visible from around the village as the carefully selected views of the artists would make out. Its inclusion was essential, however, as a symbolic stamp of traditional Breton piety which affected the whole landscape and the people who lived in it.

In fact the church had only very recently been constructed. The old church had been declared unsafe after the addition of a third bell in the belfry had proved too much for the building’s structure. A new one was therefore built in its place and completed in 1875.¹¹⁵ The Chapelle Sainte-Marguerite, on the hill to the east of Pont-Aven, was also rebuilt in the early 1880s on the site of its ruined remains. Such interest in the reconstruction of the local religious heritage would appear to indicate a factual basis for the villagers’ religious zeal. What is more, the spectacle of religious activity surrounding these buildings, with the congregation dressed in their traditional Sunday best, would have been hard for artists to ignore. Considering that Pont-Aven seems to have been a rather prosperous and civilised place, it is no wonder that the role of religious imagery, rather than savagery, became so dominant.

¹¹³ FORBES, 1886, p.119

¹¹⁴ BERTALL, 1886, p.3

¹¹⁵ See QUÉINEC, 1983, p.59

Whether the local population were modern and civilised or not, a diligent congregation dressed in traditional costume would have always held connotations of rustic primitivism for Parisian visitors.

Having been a developing feature of Gauguin's Pont-Aven motif, the religious iconography of his paintings gained much strength during his collaboration with the young Bernard. Gauguin had already elucidated artistic ideas for expressing emotion in a letter to his friend the artist Émile Schuffenecker as early as 1885 : 'Surtout ne transpirez pas sur un tableau, un grand sentiment peut être traduit immédiatement, rêvez dessus et cherchez-en la forme la plus simple.'¹¹⁶ And before meeting Bernard, Gauguin had gradually been reducing all the connotations of Breton imagery to the simplest elements of its stereotypical iconography. *La ronde des bretonnes* is a good example. Developing the distinctive *cloisonné* style together with Bernard – using delineated blocks of colour and a flattened perspective – allowed Gauguin not only to simplify the iconography but also his compositions. His art now made a distinct departure from the direct visual representation dictated by Impressionism, which had restricted his earlier paintings. His works took on a symbolist guise where simplified colours and forms could provoke most explicitly the infinite connotations that Breton imagery could hold.¹¹⁷ One of his earliest and most eloquent displays of such abstraction was *La vision après le sermon*, 1888 (fig.122).¹¹⁸

Bernard, although his own religious beliefs were rather erratic, like Gauguin was clearly interested in the religious aspect of Breton culture. He later wrote, for instance, 'J'étais redevenu très croyant; avec mon amour profond mon mysticisme avait reparu, la Bretagne avait refait de moi un catholique prêt à lutter pour l'Église "conservatrice de toutes les

¹¹⁶ Gauguin, letter to Schuffenecker, 14 January 1885, transcribed in MERLHÈS, 1984, letter 65, at p.89

¹¹⁷ See REWALD, 1978, pp.171-172 and 174-177

¹¹⁸ For discussion see THOMSON, B., 2005, pp.39-60

traditions et symbole généreux des plus nobles sentiments.”¹¹⁹ It is an aspect also emphasised by him in his own definitions of Pont-Aven as a typical Breton village motif. The religious symbolism in *Cueilleuses de poires*, 1888 (fig.123), for example, is highly loaded and ties in strongly with the Breton character of the subject matter. Being painted on glass, the immediate impression is of looking at a church window. At the centre and focus of the composition is the simplistic but very significant outline of the village with its spire, around which the whole content of the painting revolves. The Breton women picking fruit seem a strong reference to the biblical story of Genesis and therefore the primitive. Perhaps Bernard is referring to the loss of Brittany’s innocence as it enters the modern world. Gauguin’s later *Le Christ jaune*, 1889 (fig.124), while not dissimilar to Bernard’s in composition and use of religious iconography, on the contrary appears to retreat into a very secure primitivism and extremely blatant symbolism. No longer using the ‘civilised’ and subtle image of the church spire to unify the Breton community, the crucifix is brandished over the composition so that the entire scene is imbued with the significance of this ultimate symbol of Christianity. Gauguin’s reduction of the Breton motif results here in the depiction of the Pont-Aven community as an icon in itself, of Christian piety.

As Gauguin removed himself from painting visual fact, he attempted to capture a more vivid sense of place in the symbolic qualities of his work. Relying less and less on the direct source, the subject of his work became increasingly founded on the more general values he associated with Pont-Aven and Brittany. As for the apparent majority of artists, his characterisation of the place resolved in a sense of primitive rusticity and inherent piety. His conceptualisation of such traits was extreme, however, and increasingly represented an ideal whose relation to contemporary reality was significantly distorted. Rather than showing an affinity with the actual place, Gauguin’s works were perhaps more accurate in betraying his own character as a Parisian artist and his susceptibility to urban preconceptions. Both the

¹¹⁹ Émile Bernard, “L’Aventure de ma vie (1889-90)” in CAILLER, 1954, p.38

development of his non-conformist technique and his interpretation of his subject matter encapsulated the reaction of a disillusioned Parisian. No different from the many others who saw the countryside and rural imagery as a source of escapism, Gauguin's paintings were symptomatic of a more widespread discontentment with the contemporary urban environment. Due to the effects of modernisation, and the increasingly unrealistic nature of the artist's own expectations, the disparity between the reality and the ideal was growing. It is therefore unsurprising that Gauguin's disillusionment eventually spread to Brittany as well and he felt forced to leave for the South Seas.

Conclusion

The ways in which location was expressed and perceived in the landscape paintings of nineteenth-century France varied immensely. During the Third Republic the relevance and function of place was emphatic in contributing to a coherent narrative in many works. In the context of the post-war despondency regarding national identity, the long-established cultural traditions associated with specific locations would have added to a sense of reassurance. In this, the use of the village motif was especially constructive in situating the human community within the natural French landscape. And in asserting a more specific location the suggested physical and cultural identity of the place was made all the more vivid and authentic. Nonetheless, the effects conveyed by location provoke different levels of understanding. In one respect, the depiction of a village as rural suggests its distance and separation from the urban environment, perhaps confirmed by the provision of its name and region in the title. The greater the emphasis on the specific characteristics of the place, whether physical or implied, the more distinctive it would appear as an individual and independent community. To the bourgeois viewer searching for escapism, the detachment from his own urban environment would have been a significant source of appeal. Not only

did such images offer geographical relocation, but they also evoked an alternative culture and lifestyle unique to that place. Conversely, however, the perception of each place as a constituent part of the French nation is also an important element of landscape paintings from this period. Particularly in a political context, the unification of the provinces was consistent with the centralist policies of the Republic. As well as representing an individual component of *la patrie*'s cultural make-up, the village might also be seen as an allegory for the national community as a whole.

The popularity of paintings of Brittany was simply a product of this context. Its reassuring status as a French region gave added intrigue to its cultural independence and geographical isolation. Perceived as a living relic of the past, with its strong traditions and Celtic heritage, the Breton community was a haven from modern insecurities. The quest for the 'true' Breton experience was led by the artists who visited the area, and expressed as an ideal in their paintings. In being one of the most frequent destinations, Pont-Aven contributed significantly to the development of a more general Breton village motif. It acted as a gathering-place for artistic ideas, as well as providing a common subject matter. Gauguin's paintings of the village are perhaps an extreme example of the development of Breton iconography; however, his simplified imagery expresses all the more clearly the connotations and values typically associated with the area. Rather than depicting the place itself, the Breton motif became a means by which to articulate his emotions and beliefs. This trend also emerges, albeit unconsciously, among the less abstract paintings of French villages. Despite the exploratory nature of art at this time, rural imagery seems to have been more revelatory in betraying the attitudes of its producers and consumers rather than the true nature of the subject. The desire of bourgeois society to escape its urban confines is strongly evident; but it is consistently counteracted by its inability, and perhaps reluctance, to distance itself from urban bourgeois ideals.

Chapter Four

The Working Village

Émile Zola's introductory description of the Plain of Beauce in *La terre*, first published in 1887, gives a typical portrait of rural France: 'Des villages faisaient des îlots de pierre, un clocher au loin émergeait d'un pli de terrain, sans qu'on vît l'église, dans les molles ondulations de cette terre du blé.'¹ The connection between the rural community and the natural landscape was always an enduring feature of the French village motif. Particularly where the surrounding terrain was cultivated, however, the motif would have connoted a working community collaborating in an active and reciprocal relationship with the land. Considered in a national context, such iconography could appear highly loaded in representing the French population and their native soil. The French sense of affinity with the peasant worker during the Third Republic was strong. The economist Victor-Eugène Ardouin-Dumazet, for example, is cited as believing that 'there was something essentially rural about the French race.'² Indeed, until the mid-nineteenth century the rural population had grossly exceeded that of the urban. Statistics compiled by Jean Bouvier compare the percentage of those working in the rural-based industries of agriculture, forestry and fishing to those working in the urban manufacturing or service industries. They show that the proportion of the working population falling into the former category fell below 50% for the first time between 1856 and 1876.³ Towards the end of the century change began to threaten the peasant way of life; the national demographic changed significantly as rural inhabitants steadily and irrevocably moved to the cities (see graph 1). Increasing value was placed on the nation's rural heritage, especially by urban society.

¹ ZOLA, 1971, p.8

² Ardouin-Dumazet, V.-E., *Petites industries rurales*, Paris, 1912, I, cited in JONAS, 1991, p.178

³ Bouvier, J., "Working Population of France by Sector, 1856, 1876, 1896, 1906", statistics tabulated in WEBER, 1976, p.116

Art played an instrumental role in returning the urban bourgeoisie, in spirit at least, to their rustic roots. A poem by the leading poet Sully Prudhomme even equated the artistic process with that of agriculture:

L'Art ressemble à la terre, où les graines ardentes
Trouveront tous les ans du suc et des amours,
Où les moissons jamais ne sont plus abondantes
Qu'après qu'elle a subi les plus profonds labours.⁴

The rural iconography of the period served not simply as a memento, but as a focus for a national ideal and as a medium by which to express society's concerns. Taking these aspects into account, this chapter will examine the practical and symbolic significance of the village in representing a group of people working together with the land. The first section will consider the role of the village motif within the more positive depictions of cultivated landscapes. It was often constructive in complementing scenes of rural productivity with a sense of structure, unity and harmony. Such imagery clearly promoted specific moral and social values. It is therefore important to explore the various connotations which might have been inferred from this type of iconography, from religious, political and national perspectives. Yet the paintings which emerged were often highly optimistic social models based on an idealised vision of the past, and thus did not always recognise the changing aspects of modern reality. In this respect, the following section will examine the extent to which paintings of working communities addressed their contemporary context and the issues which stemmed from it. The chapter will end with a case study on Alfred Sisley's paintings of the village and river port of Saint-Mammès. In painting this distinctive barge community he was one of the few artists to convey the ideals and optimism of the Republic in the setting of a rural working community that was truly modern.

⁴ Cited in MICHEL, A., 1885, p.395

The working ideal: for God and patrie

More than creating a setting for the village, the surrounding environment was essential in defining the character, function and lifestyle of the people who lived there. Houses perched on the coast might indicate a fishing village, for example, whereas if they were surrounded by wheat fields the presumption would be that it was an agricultural community. Equally, in Fernand Quignon's *Le blé noir* (fig.94) and Edmond Petitjean's *Donjermain le Vignoble, Lorraine* (fig.125) the type of crops surrounding the villages indicated the produce in which the respective places specialised, and therefore suggested a certain sense of regional agricultural identity. As well as labelling them as typical of their provinces, the unified nature of the farming in each also seems to imply the harmonious collaboration of the respective communities towards a common purpose. Even where, for example, women are caught up in their individual domestic chores – for instance, washerwomen were a highly popular motif – the implication from the landscape is that their male counterparts are contributing to the greater cause of the village elsewhere. In Eugène Boudin's *Le Faou, marée basse: paysage aux lavandières*, painted in Brittany in 1873 (fig.126), a sense of activity is drawn mainly from the washerwomen to the right of the foreground. The dominant function of the community is, however, strongly evident in the fishing boats and estuary stretching out behind them. Similarly, in one of Jules Bastien-Lepage's paintings of his native Damvillers in the Meuse region, *Rire d'avril*, 1883 (fig.127), the background village and fields are almost equal in prominence to the scene of the dutiful women doing their washing in the foreground. While all of these paintings were expressly representing specifically distinct localities, there are nonetheless clear generalisations common to them all. The interdependence of the buildings, the people and their environment is emphatic and suggests a highly structured notion of both natural and social order. In an idealised sense, the

rural community could therefore represent an effective model in the shaping of modern society.

Certainly, the moral lessons conveyed in demonstrating the rewards of hard work were a significant element of such paintings. As stated by one of the characters in *La terre*, 'L'homme fait la terre, comme on dit en Beauce.'⁵ In many paintings of harvest scenes, for example Quignon's *La moisson*, 1890 (fig.128), the connection between the bountiful crop and the working vigour of the community is clear. In this painting the abundance of the anticipated harvest is emphasised by the extensions to the empty cart waiting to transfer the wheat, growing in the field, home to the village behind. Yet the potential benefits of the yield may only be achieved through the workers' strenuous labour. The monumental size of this painting (2.06 x 3.22m) reinforces the import of its content. Rather than a simple rustic scene for a Parisian drawing room, it was clearly intended to adorn the wall of a public building or museum and consequently would be expected to convey values of some depth and significance.

In many paintings of working villages these values were founded on a sense of Christian religiosity, most commonly symbolised by the ever-prominent *clocher*. The association of the peasant with godliness was already well established. Michael Driskel has written, for instance, in his book on nineteenth-century French religious art, about the phenomenon of the 'Christ-Peuple'. He describes the progressive 'deification of the *populos* as the repository of social virtue.'⁶ Jean-François Millet's *L'Angelus* (fig.75) was an archetypal example of the devout peasant worker. The religious devotion of the praying figures, and their deference to the church on the horizon, seems all the more virtuous in respect of their meagre yield and the evident struggle involved. The ringing of the Angelus was in itself an important aspect of

⁵ ZOLA, 1971, p.37

⁶ DRISKEL, 1992, p.178 and discussed generally at pp.165-226

rural working life, calling the peasants in the fields to prayer three times a day.⁷ It is recognised, for example, as one of the main elements of village life in André Theuriet's poem *Le village* where he described,

L'Angelus, trois fois le jour,
A l'entour
Égrène sa sonnerie,
...

The appearance of a spire or belfry, and the sound of the bells that it evoked, further reinforced the notion of the church's influence over the rural landscape.

As well as incurring an inherent sense of spirituality over the village and its surroundings, the suggested sound of the ringing bells was also an assertion of the Church's authority. The Angelus was a reminder of the structure it gave to the peasants' day, calling them to prayer at specific times and hence dictating when and how the members of a village lived their daily lives. The church, too, was also the site of baptism, marriage and burial of the village's inhabitants – presiding over the human life cycle, as well as its implicit command over the seasons and nature. Léon Lhermitte's illustration accompanying Theuriet's poem makes clear the status of the church within the community (fig.129). Placed on the summit of the hill, with the cross of its belfry at the apex of the triangular composition, the church's prominence implicitly draws the remainder of the landscape below under its auspices. The image seems to suggest a form of hierarchy and strict social structure. Highly ordered, with the houses and the fields lying more or less concentrically around the church – the homes of its inhabitants then the fields and countryside – this religious institution is clearly depicted as the dominant influence over every aspect of the village. Émile Barau's *Jardinage d'automne* (*Boult-sur-Suippe*), 1885 (fig.24), is another example of this type of iconography. While the presence of the church may seem somewhat overbearing, however, the reciprocal nature of

⁷ See CORBIN, 1998, pp.115-116, 128-136

⁸ THEURIET, 1888, p.244

the relationship between God and man was the main feature of these paintings' rather moralistic messages. The peasant's bond with the land and his dependence on nature's vagaries for survival placed him, as some saw it, in direct contact with God. The lessons in the imagery were therefore clear in paintings such as Albert Rigolot's *La moisson en Seine et Marne* (fig.17), where the point of the belfry echoes that of the wheat sheaves underneath. Diligence and piety would be rewarded by a rich harvest and nature's generosity. In a speech to farmers in 1876, encouraging against rural emigration, the Poitevin lawyer Normand referred to, 'la loi sainte et impérieuse du travail à laquelle le Créateur nous a soumis, et dont l'accomplissement est encore l'élément le plus sûr du vrai bonheur.'⁹ The closeness of the peasant to nature meant that there was a marked connection between devotion to the land and devotion to God, as if His fundamental design for man was agriculture.

Whereas an uncultivated landscape might seem wild and savage, the scenes of a highly structured rural society with its submissively moral working class and richly productive fields would, on the contrary, have appeared as a model for an ordered society. For an urban audience which was attempting to deal with the instability of post-war politics, economic recession, industrialisation and urban sprawl, this form of rural utopia would have been an attractive alternative.¹⁰ Yet such values were not exclusive to Christianity. It was also in the interests of the secular Republic to associate itself with certain aspects of the ideal peasant lifestyle as it attempted to assert its authority over the nation and stabilise the post-war social climate. In rejecting the Church, however, it was important for the Republic to justify itself by establishing its own moral principles which were essentially very similar. The concepts of the nuclear family, the diligent worker and the close community, for example, were integral both to Christian values and to the Republican vision of France. Thérèse Burollet, in her text

⁹ Normand (advocate in Poitiers), « Discours aux cultivateurs », *Bulletin de la Société d'Agriculture de la Vienne*, Poitiers, juillet 1876 transcribed in PITIÉ, 1987, p.70

¹⁰ See GRAD & RIGGS, 1982, at p.135, discussing reasons for the popularity of the pastoral mode in nineteenth-century French art.

accompanying an exhibition on the decoration of the Parisian *mairies*, has described the Republican ideology saying, ‘Mis à part les aspects modernes du civisme, la morale républicaine est, en fait, totalement démarquée de la morale chrétienne qu’elle a simplement laïcisée.’¹¹ To some extent it was as if the State was trying to expropriate people’s loyalty to the Church in developing a sense of patriotic fervour. Robert Tombs describes this phenomenon as the creation of a ‘republican religion’.¹² Rather than God, it was *la terre française* which was venerated as the ‘motherland’ and provider to the French people. In this, the peasant’s relationship with his native soil could equally be used and interpreted as a symbol of devotion to *la patrie*.

After the Franco-Prussian war the State was particularly keen to inspire optimism in its population and to encourage re-growth, unity and productivity. The concept of the agricultural village community collaborating to make fertile the French soil, and working toward a common cause, encapsulated Republican aspirations well. Such sentiments are, for example, clearly evident in the exceptionally patriotic Republican school text *Le tour de la France par deux enfants* of 1877. As the denouement of the story the different characters are finally reunited and agree to work together to repair their farmstead and cultivate the fields. One of them proclaims,

Si la guerre a rempli le pays de ruines, c’est à nous tous, enfants de la France,
d’effacer ce deuil par notre travail, et de féconder cette vieille terre française qui
n’est jamais ingrate à la main qui la soigne.¹³

The emphasis on contributing to the nation’s well-being through work was strong. Through agriculture especially, the symbolic implications of providing food for the country’s population were clear. As Theuriet wrote in his book *La vie rustique*, ‘Celui qui rend la terre

¹¹ Burollet, T., “Prolégomènes à l’étude du mur républicain”, in GENTIL, 1986, pp.22-42 at 36

¹² TOMBS, 1996, pp.139-140

¹³ BRUNO, (1877) 1925, p.226

féconde, celui qui nourrit la société toute entière, est véritablement le roi de cette société.’¹⁴

Not only was the rural community seen as giving physical nourishment, but it was also the provider of moral strength and sustenance; implicitly the foundation of French identity.

Publicly commissioned art from this period forms a particularly lucid visualisation of specifically Republican ideals.¹⁵ Among other inspirational themes, *Le travail* was one of the dominant motifs adorning the walls of buildings like the *mairie*. It appeared in different forms. Henri Lévy’s *Le travail sous l’égide de la République amène l’abondance et la prospérité* (fig.130), for example, designed for the ‘escalier d’honneur’ in the Mairie de Pantin in 1886, shows a traditionally allegorical approach to the brief. Paul Baudouin’s *Famille et Travail* in the Mairie de Saint-Maur’s ‘salle des mariages’, 1882 (fig.131), on the other hand, is emphatically naturalistic. Now that naturalism was being accepted more and more into the higher echelons of the artistic mainstream, there was a gradual but distinct shift away from the overtly classical allegory favoured by the more conservative academics. Especially after 1879, under the control of the Opportunist Republic, the State was far more encouraging and liberal towards more progressive forms of art.¹⁶ What Burollet has termed ‘symboles réalistes’ were frequent among the decorative schemes of the Third Republic *mairies*.¹⁷ Considering those of the Parisian arrondissements, the proportion of friezes depicting elements of rural life makes clear its perceived relevance to the people of France generally, even to those in the heart of the city. Albert Tanoux’s *La noce* for the Mairie du XIVe, 1888 (fig.132), for example, represents an exclusively rural setting animated by rustic types, with no recognition of the city whatsoever.

¹⁴ THEURIET, 1888, p.284

¹⁵ See generally GENTIL, 1986

¹⁶ See HOUSE, 2004, p.198

¹⁷ Burollet, T., “Prolégomènes à l’étude du mur républicain”, in GENTIL, 1986, pp.22-42 at 35

The ‘salles des mariages’ in particular were often full of decorative panels with idealistic images for the young couples to aspire to as they embarked on their new lives together. Adrien Karbowsky’s *La jeunesse*, painted in 1889 for the Mairie de Nogent-sur-Marne (fig.133), is one example where the village and the ripe wheat field act as a backdrop to the enactment of burgeoning youth. While the scene tends to the ‘pastoral’ and the activity seems trivial, the implied prospects of family, work and contentment give the image a sense of moral authority. The combining of youth and the ripe crop, in particular, promotes optimistically the fertility of the French soil and in turn the French people. Theuriet echoed this notion in writing, ‘Pour le paysan, se marier c’est fructifier.’¹⁸ The benefits of the peasant lifestyle were evident not only in reward from the soil, but were also reflected in the health, harmony and continuity of the generations. Since the French defeat in 1870-71, a feeling of national impotence had overwhelmed much of French society and was prolonged by a continuing fall in birth rates (see graph 2). It brought into question the decadence of the increasingly urban French lifestyle and placed favour on the simplicity of the peasant existence. Fertility and continuity were themes which arose frequently in paintings of rural life. While the fields represented growth and fertility, the village as a marker of community was integral in suggesting the continuity of the extended family, the generations and even the national community. In Émile Isembart’s *Avril en Franche Comté*, 1886 (fig.13), for example, the blossoming trees and the planting of vegetables, reinforce the notion of re-growth and continuity evident in the figures of different ages. And behind, the buildings, in particular the church, *la terre française* and the mountains, extend the idea of continuity as witnesses of past and future generations.

The peasant community appears to have offered a source of salvation for a demoralised and unsettled population. It was a largely urban society for which such idealistic iconography was intended, however. Theuriet wrote, for example,

¹⁸ THEURIET, 1888, p.275

La famille paysanne, même avec ses rudesses, ses grossièretés et ses tares, est encore l'élément le plus vivace et le plus sain de la société actuelle, et c'est dans la culture de la terre, dans la vie campagnarde en plein air que la bourgeoisie française devrait désormais chercher le rajeunissement et le salut.¹⁹

Set among the upheaval of the modern city, remote from the realities of rural life, it was easy for the urban population to idealise a 'working village' of which they had little direct experience. While the iconography formed a concise symbol of the French moral ideal, whether religious or secular, its compatibility with the realities of modern France was doubtful. Considering again, for example, Karbowsky's decorative scheme for the Mairie de Nogent-sur-Marne, the upright bourgeois family in *le villégiature* and the rustic figures and setting of *le labourage* seem to sit rather uneasily side by side (figs.134 and 135). Particularly with regard to Republican policy, which appeared to promote the qualities of the traditional working village, its values perceived as a whole seem to have been contradictory. The progressive and civilized nation which the Republic was endeavouring to create would inevitably bring change, to which this traditional rural community was effectively highly vulnerable. Discussion of the Republican perception of the countryside by the characters in *La terre* stresses the disparity between the urban ideal and the difficulties of rural existence. A Bonapartist text entitled *Le triomphe de Jacques Bonhomme* is read out to the family around the fire:

"La vie des champs n'a point son égale, tu possèdes le vrai bonheur, loin des lambris dorés; et la preuve, c'est que les ouvriers des villes viennent se régaler à la campagne, de même que les bourgeois n'ont qu'un rêve, se retirer près de toi, cueillir des fleurs, manger des fruits aux arbres, faire des cabrioles sur le gazon. Dis-toi bien, Jacques Bonhomme, que l'argent est une chimère. Si tu as la paix du coeur ta fortune est faite."²⁰

Yet for many peasants the key to peace of mind was monetary wealth.

¹⁹ THEURIET, 1888, p.284,

²⁰ ZOLA, 1971, p.82-3

The 'real' working village

The Second Empire had been a period of relative prosperity for farmers. Due to a variety of different factors, however, the 1870s and 80s witnessed a significant drop in both the output and revenue of French agriculture (see graph 3). Jonathan Liebowitz's analysis of the agricultural depression blames, in part, a series of poor harvests throughout the 1870s, in 1870, 1871, 1873, 1876, with a particularly severe crop failure in 1879 which affected the whole of Europe.²¹ The wine industry also suffered as a large proportion of vineyards were decimated by the spread of mildew and phylloxera. The resulting shortage of native produce opened the market to foreign competition, which then slowed recovery in the 1880s as French producers struggled to re-establish their market status. Russia, Germany, India and the United States were responsible for a large increase in the import of cereal crops, especially wheat.²² Concerns regarding the growing strength of New-World competition were also voiced at the time. One commentator wrote,

Nous sommes au début d'un conflit qui est destiné à changer les conditions économiques du Vieux monde ; c'est le prélude de la concurrence qui ne pouvait manquer de naître un jour entre le monde ancien et les sociétés nouvelles.²³

It had only recently been made possible for France's rural population to take advantage of the larger national market due to the developments in the national infrastructure. Having been tempted by its benefits, and now vulnerable to market forces, farmers and agricultural workers were increasingly under pressure to ensure their livelihood. For many the solution presented itself in relocating to jobs in urban factories where a source of income would be guaranteed.

²¹ LIEBOWITZ, 1989, p.439

²² See LIEBOWITZ, 1989, p.440

²³ Ville, G., *Le propriétaire devant sa ferme délaissée*, 4th Ed. 1890, transcribed in PITIÉ, 1987, p.72

The productivity and unity promoted by Republican imagery was paradoxically countered by a period of depression, desperation and dispersal of communities in many areas of rural France. In the artistic context, therefore, there was a distinct tension between the reality of the rural condition and the urban idealisation of peasant life, particularly for the naturalist artist committed to painting the 'truth'. It is therefore important to consider the extent to which paintings of working villages were sympathetic to the reality of change.

There were those in society generally who saw peasants themselves as the cause of their own difficulties. Economists, in particular, criticized the reluctance of many to invest in the modernisation and expansion of their farmsteads. Most believed that large-scale industrial-sized farms were the solution to the economic difficulties and that the large number of small family farms was hindering progress.²⁴ The production levels of these more traditional establishments were usually based on subsistence and therefore contributed little to the greater wealth of the nation. They were quite distinct from the more expansive farms which were essentially run as capitalist enterprises.²⁵ For the subsistence farmer there was little incentive to modernise and expand when yields were good. Conversely, if the harvest was poor then he could probably not afford any modern specialist equipment, which would likely have to be bought and maintained by agents outside his own village. Although some blame mechanisation for rural depopulation, it may also be suggested that it was in fact the other way round. Because so many labourers were migrating to the towns and cities, farmers eventually had to compensate for the lack of man-power with machinery.

Not only the size of farms, but also that of individual fields was a contentious issue. The traditional practice of peasants splitting their land equally between their children meant that

²⁴ See HEYWOOD, 1981, p.359; and LIEBOWITZ, 1989, p.435

²⁵ See WEBER, 1976, p.117

plots would become increasingly smaller and farms more disparate. Written commentaries certainly reflected an amount of disapproval regarding such practices. The influential eighteenth-century English economist Arthur Young, spoke of the ‘great evil’ of small farms in France as early as the 1780s: ‘Go to districts where the properties are minutely divided, and you will find great distress, and even misery, and probably very bad agriculture.’²⁶ Zola’s detailed account in *La terre* of the process of dividing the father’s land between the rest of the family would certainly reinforce this type of interpretation. The reasoning of the surveyor is met with bickering and avarice which end in the least profitable solution for everyone.

Est-ce que les déplacements et les charrois ne devenaient pas ruineux, avec des lopins larges comme des mouchoirs ? est-ce que c’était une culture, ces jardinets où l’on ne pouvait améliorer les assolements, ni employer les machines ? Non, la seule chose raisonnable était de s’entendre, de ne pas découper un champ ainsi qu’une galette, un vrai meurtre !

... Il y avait encore, sur le plateau, quatre hectares de terres de labour, mais divisés en une dizaine de pièces ayant chacune moins d’un arpent ; même une parcelle ne comptait que douze ares, et l’arpenteur ayant demandé en ricanant s’il fallait aussi la détailler, la discussion recommença.²⁷

In art, the results which the division of fields had on the landscape are visible in a number of paintings. Whether artists shared this negative point of view regarding the small farms is less clear, however. Émile Le Marié des Landelles’s painting, *Les onze acres* (fig.136), for example, appeared at the Salon of 1887, the same year that *La terre* was published. Although the detail offered by the catalogue illustration is limited, it is evident that the work depicted a rather stark vision of the agricultural landscape. The clearly marked strips of field appear empty of crops as they lead the eye toward the rooftops of a diminutive village in the background. Most striking, however, is the bare and rather foreboding tree in the foreground that is dominant over the whole landscape. The bountiful strips of crops in Camille Pissarro’s

²⁶ Arthur Young, *Travels in France during the Years 1787, 1788 and 1789*, Cambridge University Press, 1950, pp.276-300, cited in HEYWOOD, 1981, p.359

²⁷ See ZOLA, 1971, pp.39-41

Harvest Landscape at Pontoise, 1873 (fig.137), however, form a strong contrast in presenting a beautifully sunlit depiction of what Richard Brettell terms, ‘traditional rural charm’.²⁸ Another example is Jan Monchablon’s rather more nostalgic *Campagne lorraine en automne* (fig.138). An elaborately detailed panorama of his native countryside, the small strips of field create an intricate network, blanketing the contours of the landscape, with villages scattered over it sporadically. While the distant background is bathed in sunlight, the hints at autumn and the shadow encroaching on the foreground might imply a sense of melancholy. Even more poignant, however, are the hills on the horizon which, considering the location of the scene, could only be what was commonly known as ‘the blue line of the Vosges’. Their relevance was particularly resonant at this time as they marked the boundary between France and the French territory which had been ceded to the Prussians during the war. The painting’s significance in representing traditional rural France was therefore emphatic.

A sizeable faction was of course protective of the traditions and wary of change. A report on the harvest in *Le Temps* in 1878, for example, discussed the benefits of the smaller holdings in that they could take more attentive and personalised care over their crops:

La petite culture a quand il s’agit de recueillir un avantage marqué sur la grande; elle n’a point à lutter contre l’indifférence et le mauvais vouloir du travail mercenaire ; agissant sur des parcelles de médiocre étendue, elle peut prodiguer à leurs produits des soins de tous les instants...²⁹

Whether sentiments were always based on reasoned deduction is doubtful, however. The popularity of the idealised village motif during this period would tend to indicate far more romantic convictions. That is not to say, however, that artists did not attempt to deal with rustic reality in their paintings. Zola’s tribute to rural realism in *La terre*, made a brutal and

²⁸ Brettell, R., “The Fields of France” in BRETTELL & SCHAEFER, 1984, pp.241-247 at 248; see also Herbert, R., “City vs. Country: The Rural Image in French Painting from Millet to Gauguin” in HERBERT, 2002, pp.23-48 at 44

²⁹ CHERVILLE, 1878

almost gruesome interpretation of village life which completely contradicted the rustic ideal; the book caused uproar, both in France and abroad.³⁰ His version of rural savagery did not translate well onto canvas, however. As explained by Brettell, ‘The novel could be fumed over and put aside; the painting could not.’³¹ Works such as Gustave Courbet’s *Enterrement à Ornans*³² were perhaps closer to Zola’s candour, yet it was the more melancholic adaptation of realism, as in paintings by Millet, which was essentially the most palatable to the eye. In the early Third Republic, it was the new generation of naturalists who attempted to adopt the earlier realist mantle in painting ‘true’ interpretations of rural life.

The artist Jules Bastien-Lepage, whose career was cut short at the age of 36 by illness in 1884, was hugely influential in defining the values of the Third Republic’s naturalist artists. In a letter to the critic Louis de Fourcaud he wrote, ‘Nothing is good but truth. People ought to paint what they know and love. I come from a village in Lorraine. I mean, first of all, to paint the peasants and landscapes of my home exactly as they are’; he wanted to paint, ‘the sincere expression of the actual conditions of life.’³³ Although his works were mostly genre paintings, their setting was key. In writing a biography of the artist, George Clausen described Bastien-Lepage’s naturalism as, ‘the endeavour to realize truly the natural relation of people to their surroundings.’³⁴ Indeed it was the landscape in which the artist placed his figures which gave them their identity and authenticity. Taking his *L’Amour au village*, exhibited in the Salon of 1882 (fig.139), as an example, the village behind contributes to the image in implying a lifestyle, history and future, to complement the young couple’s meeting. Although one cartoonist made fun of the flatness of Bastien-Lepage’s perspective (suggesting that the village was on top of the figures rather than behind) it illustrates the

³⁰ See BROWN, 1995, pp.606-611

³¹ Brettell, R., “Pissarro, Cézanne, and the School of Pontoise” in BRETTELL & SCHAEFER, 1984, pp.175-205 at 181

³² Musée d’Orsay, Paris

³³ Bastien-Lepage, letter to De Fourcaud, cited and translated in CARTWRIGHT, 1894, pp.17 and 21

³⁴ Clausen, G., “Jules Bastien-Lepage as Artist” in THEURIET, 1892, pp.107-127 at 112

significance of the community in the composition (fig.140). What is more, by situating the majority of his images in or around his native Damvillers, the name of which he wrote on most of his works, the people in the paintings could be associated with an existing place, not just a stereotype. As the artist was also from the village, his implied knowledge of the people and location would have reinforced the depth and ‘truth’ of his characters. His subjects were depicted in near-photographic detail which again contributed to the sense of reality. The meticulous tangle of leaves and wild plants which surrounds the figures in *L'Amour au village*, for example, would infer that they were portrayed directly from nature rather than being the product of the artist’s imagination. A good friend of the artist, Theuriet wrote that his paintings were, ‘like windows opening upon life itself.’³⁵

Despite Bastien-Lepage’s declarations, however, paintings such as this one would still appear to conform to a recognisable type. *L'Amour au village*, for example, differs little in iconography from the popular motif of the *fiançailles*, as in Aimé Perret’s *Le printemps de la vie*, (fig.141) from the Salon of 1885. Paradoxically, as was demonstrated regarding paintings of village locations, the ‘truth’ of a painting could also be enhanced by confirming people’s preconceived ideas. Although Bastien-Lepage spent long periods of time in Damvillers, in his efforts to convey its attributes to the Parisian audience exactly as he perceived them, a slight sense of his own nostalgic pride seems to emerge. His agreement with Theuriet to collaborate on *La vie rustique* by doing the illustrations for it would certainly indicate his emotional attachment to the traditional way of life. Intended as a record of the ‘true’ peasant lifestyle, the book was a decisive statement against modernisation. Due to the artist’s untimely death, his own ideas for the publication never came to fruition. Lhermitte, a naturalist artist from the village of Mont-Saint-Père on the Marne, who had a similar method and approach to Bastien-Lepage, took his place. In the introduction to the

³⁵ THEURIET, 1892, p.100

publication Theuriet recognised the hardship of peasant life, citing a poem entitled *Chanson du blé* by Pierre Dupont,

Chemine, Chemine
Pauvre paysan,
Travaille et rumine,
Sinon ta ruine
Est au bout de l'an !³⁶

Yet he found this struggle noble, and protested against the changes which the modern era was bringing, '[il y a] un développement anormal de la vie scientifique et industrielle... l'usine remplacera la ferme. ... Alors, ce sera fini de la vie rustique; on n'en trouvera plus le charme et le pittoresque...' ³⁷ His writing in the rest of the book does not refer to this modern countryside at all, however. Equally, Lhermitte's illustrations depict rustic scenes which arguably seem to portray bourgeois ideals for the Parisian market rather than a peasant's compassion. Considered from their perspective, as from that of many other artists, the contemporary state of rural life was not 'real' but a modern corruption of what had been the lasting tradition of *autrefois*. And it was hoped by many, that through the somewhat delusional protestations of nostalgia, this tradition would at some stage be re-established.

Modernity and the rural working village were not completely incompatible. But those villages that had adapted did not necessarily conform to preconceived ideas of the traditional and picturesque, and were therefore treated hesitantly by artists. The raising of livestock was one area which was growing steadily. Because of the perishable nature of meat and dairy products the capacity of foreign nations to compete was limited.³⁸ Whereas traditionally most families had one or two cows or pigs for their own use and only sold their surplus, areas like Brittany began breeding herds of cattle and prospered from exporting on the newly built railways to the growing towns and cities. The trade in butter to England also brought

³⁶ Dupont, P., *Chanson du blé*, transcribed in THEURIET, 1888, II

³⁷ THEURIET, 1888, IV

³⁸ See LIEBOWITZ, 1989, p.441

significant revenue.³⁹ While some paintings might have shown a dairy maid with a couple of cows, there was little sign of large-scale stock-raising. Equally, vegetables were not nearly as badly affected as cereal crops by the downturn in the market, and farms began to diversify. Gauguin's painting *Les meules*, 1890 (fig.142), for example, with its passing herd of Breton cows and variety of crops, depicted a relatively progressive agricultural landscape. As was often the case, however, such modernity was not recognised or acknowledged by the artist, and the overall allusion was to the rusticity of the anti-modern motif. Another example might be Bastien-Lepage's *Saison d'octobre : récolte des pommes de terre*, 1879 (fig.143). While such genre scenes were highly popular in the Salon, however, such crops were perhaps not as aesthetic in landscapes as swathes of ripe grain.

Around Paris, a number of villages became significantly involved in market gardening to feed the growing city's stomach, yet they were rarely considered picturesque enough to warrant being painted. Clare Willson, for instance, discusses the art world's distaste for 'vulgar vegetables' when they began to appear in the landscapes of the Impressionists.⁴⁰ Camille Pissarro's paintings of L'Hermitage, situated on the north-eastern edge of Paris beside the town of Pontoise were among the most commented on. Rather than the ever more prevalent commercial market gardens, however, works such as *Kitchen Garden at L'Hermitage, Pontoise*, 1874 (fig.144), focused on the domesticity of the smaller kitchen gardens. Distinct from the epic resonance of the working community providing the life-bread of the nation, Pissarro's paintings conveyed the banality of independent subsistence.⁴¹ Although there was this element of realism in these paintings, he too was unable to distance himself completely from rural idealism.⁴² His active adherence to the Anarchist-Communist

³⁹ PRICE, 1983, p.376

⁴⁰ WILLSDON, 2004, p.179

⁴¹ See Brettell, R., "Pissarro, Cézanne, and the School of Pontoise" in BRETTELL & SCHAEFER, 1984, pp.175-205 at 181; and WILLSDON, 2004, pp.179-181

⁴² Brettell, R., "Pissarro, Cézanne, and the School of Pontoise" in BRETTELL & SCHAEFER, 1984, pp.175-205 at 179

theories of Pierre Kropotkin, who thought that society should be de-centralised and village oriented, is evident in his enthusiasm for the working village motif.⁴³ Despite his modern style and radical beliefs, however, the kitchen gardens and rustic buildings that he chose to paint were a markedly traditional aspect of village life that was gradually disappearing.⁴⁴ Richard Brettell has discussed Pissarro's apparent avoidance of the modern countryside, describing one of his rare depictions of agricultural machinery in *The Threshing Machine* (fig.145) as 'timid'.⁴⁵ Certainly, for Pissarro the modernity of these works lay not in his subject matter but in his interpretation of the working community and the ideas he expressed in painting the village landscape.⁴⁶

There was clearly a marked reluctance in the visual imagery of the Third Republic to recognise contemporary rural life from a direct and objective viewpoint. The purpose of the motif was not to depict reality but to serve in manipulating the morals and nostalgia of the bourgeois audience. The image of the ideal working village presented a form of symbolic utopia which would have been far more convincing for the urban masses. Most would either be ignorant of rural life or nostalgic about it, having left. Artists who professed to show the 'true' countryside were restricted by aestheticism. The majority rejected modernity or, at the most, made a tacitly gloomy allusion to the disadvantages of change. While the prevalence of such imagery may have encouraged enthusiasm and sympathy for the countryside, its selective romanticism meant that sentiments were often somewhat misplaced. Anxieties as to the stability of the rural population appear to have revolved in many ways around the desire to reassure urban insecurities. It seems that many would have been content for peasants to

⁴³ See NORD, 2000, p.97; WILLSDON, 2004, pp.181, 190 and 192-134; and Herbert, R., "City vs. Country: The Rural Image in French Painting from Millet to Gauguin" in HERBERT, 2002, pp.23-48 at 42

⁴⁴ See WILLSDON, 2004, p.190

⁴⁵ Brettell, R., "The Fields of France" in BRETTELL & SCHAEFER, 1984, pp.241-247 at 243; and see also BRETTELL, 1990, pp.31-33 and 58-61

⁴⁶ See WILLSDON, 2002, p.191; and Brettell, R., "Pissarro, Cézanne, and the School of Pontoise", pp.175-205 at 181-182

continue living behind the times in a state of poverty if it meant that an approximation of the traditional rural ideal was upheld. The melancholy with which a number of artists responded to the current rural condition will be dealt with in the next chapter; however, it is equally important to consider the minority of artists that considered the modern working village with optimism. The following case study will therefore examine Alfred Sisley's unusually contemporary depictions of the riverside village of Saint-Mammès; even less conventional in that it was not an agricultural community.

Alfred Sisley and Saint-Mammès

In early 1880 Alfred Sisley followed the example of his Impressionist colleagues, Monet and Pissarro, and went to live in the countryside beyond the Parisian *banlieue*. Having left the suburb of Sèvres, he and his family moved into a rented house in the village of Veneux-Nadon on the edge of the Forest of Fontainebleau. At that time it was two hours away from the city by train. Despite moving house a number of times, the artist would remain living and working in the area until his death from cancer in 1899. During the 1880s he resided in Veneux-Nadon, the nearby town of Moret-sur-Loing and then the village Les Sablons, finally returning to settle definitively in Moret in 1889 (see map 7). At that time the two villages were small and separate, now they merge and are known as Veneux-les-Sablons. Over the twenty years that Sisley lived in the Moret area he painted his surroundings extensively and methodically, creating a veritable portrait of the region. However, one of his favourite subjects during his first five years in the area was not the places where he was resident, but the neighbouring village of Saint-Mammès. Situated on the confluence of the River Loing and the Seine, it served as a busy river port for the barges going to and from Paris. Rather than painting the conventional agricultural village motif, Sisley chose to depict the life and activity of a community whose existence revolved around the water. This case

study will therefore examine the ways in which Sisley characterised the rural working village in painting Saint-Mammès. Using local historical sources, the first section will attempt to set the works in the context of the village as it was at that time. Having identified the aspects of the village which captured the artist's interest, the following sections will then consider the conceptual perspectives from which he viewed it. Particularly relevant to this thesis, for example, are the possible political associations present in these works. Essentially, the aim of the study will be to isolate the number of possible motives and values which may have influenced his choice of subject and the way he painted the village of Saint-Mammès.

Sisley's 'picturesque'

It is clear that Saint-Mammès constituted a major source of inspiration for Sisley when he first moved to the Moret area. Around a third of his 275 works from between 1880 and 1885 featured the village.⁴⁷ Together and individually, these landscapes present a detailed account of a cohesive, structured and active rural community. Contrasted against other contemporary descriptions of the place, however, the selectivity of his approach is evident. Although his outlook was different to that of other artists painting in the area, and those painting villages generally, the way in which he depicted Saint-Mammès still suggests a quest for a picturesque ideal. This section will therefore introduce the different aspects characteristic to the area during that period and examine the elements highlighted in Sisley's work.

From an artistic point of view, the town of Moret fitted much more neatly into conventional ideas regarding the 'picturesque' and what was suitable subject matter for a landscape painting. It was visually and historically far more interesting, with its medieval town walls

⁴⁷ See DAULTE, 1956, paintings from 1880-1885

and imposing church and keep, both dating back to the twelfth century. The railway meant that there was already a form of ‘tourist’ culture, as described by Mlle. Collin, a school teacher in Moret, in 1889, ‘La belle saison amène un grand nombre de touristes attirés non seulement par le charme de ses environs, mais surtout par ses monuments historiques.’⁴⁸ Such sites also attracted numerous artists. A 1901 tourist guide to the town explained that they were ‘séduits par ses ruines si intéressantes, par ses sites pittoresques et par sa situation sanitaire due au voisinage de la forêt et des cours d’eau qui l’arrosent...’⁴⁹ Its bridge and turreted gate house, as well as the church, had been painted over the course of the nineteenth century by artists such as Léon Fleury and Théodore Rousseau, for example in the latter’s *Le pont à Moret*, c.1828-29 (fig.146). Artists contemporary to Sisley, such as Léon Lhermitte, Edmond Yon and Edmond Petitjean also focussed on such aspects – as in Petitjean’s misleadingly titled, *Vieux village de France* (fig.147). Their works were typical of Salon landscape paintings in highlighting the scenic and historic aspects of the region. Each carefully excluded the rather more modern flour mills which dominated the centre of the river.

Although these more popular views did appear in Sisley’s later works, it is clear that when he first moved to the area he was purposely avoiding following convention. In 1882 he wrote to Monet saying that he thought Moret was ‘un peu paysage dessus-de-tabatière,’ in other words ‘a bit of a chocolate-box landscape’.⁵⁰ Where Sisley did paint Moret in these early years, he chose precisely the subjects that others had rejected. When painting *Le moulin Provencher à Moret*, c.1883 (fig.148), for example, the artist would have been standing in front of the medieval gates with his back to them. Instead he was creating his own version of

⁴⁸ COLLIN, 1889, p.3

⁴⁹ FÉJARD, 1901, p.8

⁵⁰ Sisley to Monet, 21 August 1881, published in ‘Sisley’, *Bulletin des expositions*, Galerie d’Art Braun, Paris, 30 Jan.-18 Feb. 1933, p.7, and transcribed by Pomarède, V., “‘Tous ceux qui ont aimé la nature et qui ont senti fortement.’ Alfred Sisley, le rénovateur réservé et résolu du paysage classique” in STEVENS & DUMAS, 2002, pp.60-79 at 78, fn.58

‘picturesque’, with the washer-women to the right and the men carting sacks to the imposing mill building on the left, all between blue skies and rippling waters. Equally, in *Le chantier Matrat, Moret-sur-Loing*, 1882 (fig.149), although Moret’s historic church is an imposing feature, the activity in the foreground is just as important in defining the character of the location. Similar to his images of Saint-Mammès of the same period, he was presenting a harmonious depiction of a working community. Such ideas are reflected in Alexandre Hepp’s review of the 7th Impressionist exhibition for *Le Voltaire* in 1882: ‘Ils font l’idylle du travail et prennent la poésie toute crue dans la réalité...’⁵¹ For scenes of active productivity, however, Saint-Mammès offered far more to the artist than Moret.

The only other artist from this period also known to have painted Saint-Mammès is Antoine Guillemet, for example in *Saint-Mammès, près de Moret-sur-Loing* (fig.150). Sisley mentioned meeting him one day in 1885 in a letter to Paul Durand-Ruel.⁵² Guillemet preferred to paint Moret, however, and his views of Saint-Mammès are distant, conveying little sense of the community’s character. The title of the painting, for instance, simply assimilates the village to the better-known landscapes of scenic Moret. Saint-Mammès was in fact very different to the other settlements in the area, largely because of its specialised function. Its existence revolved almost entirely around the comings and goings of the barges, and it was populated mostly by bargemen, or *mariniers*, and their families. ‘Saint-Mammès, c’est un village de mariniers’⁵³ was and is still a common claim, as Vanessa Manceron cites in her history of the village. There was some agriculture among those who lived *à terre*, particularly in vines.⁵⁴ A map of the village, sketched by the new schoolmaster M. Rausoir in December 1888, shows the extent of the land cultivated by the Saint-Mammès community (map 8). In neighbouring areas viticulture was the main local industry, producing the

⁵¹ Hepp, A., “Impressionistes”, *Le Voltaire*, 3 Mar. 1882, p.3 in BERSON, 1996, p.393

⁵² Sisley to Durand-Ruel, from Les Sablons, 12 June 1885, transcribed in VENTURI, 1939, II, p.39

⁵³ MANCERON, 1994, p.39

⁵⁴ See RAUSOIR, 1888, p.2

Chasselas dessert grapes which were grown against long walls lining the surrounding hillsides. In contrast to this commercial production of grapes for eating, the Mammésiens produced a wine for personal use that was apparently almost undrinkable.⁵⁵ Nonetheless, an inquest into agricultural and industrial work in 1848 stated, ‘L’industrie principale de Saint-Mammès est la marine et la culture de la vigne. La marine tient la première place.’⁵⁶ By the 1870s and 1880s the situation was still the same. Like many of the land-based professions in the village, viticulture and agriculture often acted as a supplement to the sporadic nature of work on the barges.⁵⁷

Saint-Mammès was not a port for loading and unloading cargo, rather it was a stopping place for barges as they arrived at the end of the Canal du Loing and embarked on the more erratic waters of the Seine, or vice versa. L’Abbé Clément wrote in 1900, in his history of the village, ‘Le pays vit des transports par eau. La plupart des hommes conduisent, de Saint-Mammès à Paris et au-delà, les bateaux qui, par le canal “ce chemin qui marche”, arrivent de Montargis, d’Orléans et du centre de la France.’⁵⁸ A map of the French waterways during the nineteenth century shows the nature of the canal network (map 9). Whereas most of the barges arriving from the south would have travelled on purpose-built canals, navigating the river would have required more specialist skills. Boats would usually stop at Saint-Mammès to take on a *pilote*, who would be familiar with the Seine’s currents and the undulations of the land under the surface.⁵⁹ According to Rausoir’s report most of them made between fifty and sixty trips to Paris each year, each lasting two to three days.⁶⁰ Due to the more dangerous nature of the journey from Saint-Mammès to Paris, those families that lived a nomadic life on the boats might also disembark at the confluence to await their return. Some barges’

⁵⁵ Interview with M. Dabin, Mayor of Saint-Mammès, November 2002

⁵⁶ *Enquête ouverte au chef-lieu de canton sur la question du travail agricole et industriel*, 1848, cited in MANCERON, 1994, p.16

⁵⁷ See MANCERON, 1994, p.16

⁵⁸ CLÉMENT, 1900, p.171

⁵⁹ See REGNAULT, 1991, p.91

⁶⁰ RAUSOIR, 1888, p.4

living quarters consisted of a cabin which could be moved onto the land on such occasions, and it was common to see them on the banks between Saint-Mammès and Moret. They feature in some of Sisley's paintings, such as *Le chantier Matrat*, under the trees to the left. As a natural stopping point, Saint-Mammès was also a centre for boat building and repairs, the hire of haulage animals such as horses, donkeys or mules, and for general supplies.⁶¹ Everything in the village related to the river in some way, not least the cafés which acted as business forums as well as places where the men could gain relief from their strenuous work on the river.⁶²

Sisley depicted the functioning of the village extensively, for example in paintings such as *Vieilles maisons de Saint-Mammès, automne*, 1880 (fig.151). What is not evident from his often rather serene paintings of the diligent Mammésiens, however, was that locally the village had rather an undesirable reputation. The life of the *mariniers* who lived on their boats was to some extent gypsy-like, and apparently they were even sometimes referred to as 'chie dans l'eau' by those on land.⁶³ The village was also notorious for its large number of bars as well as the unruly nature of those who frequented them. The men would spend much of their time there, talking business but also drinking. As one Mammésien described: 'À six heures du matin, les femmes, elles étaient parties en commission, les hommes ils étaient partis au café...'⁶⁴ Saint-Mammès would not have been a place for the respectable young ladies of Moret to go for a stroll. The villagers' reputation was not aided by the low level of literacy arising from barge-life and irregular schooling, a fact bemoaned by the despairing Rausoir.⁶⁵ The former mayor of Veneux-Nadon Jean-Michel Regnault, however, excuses the barge workers in his book of local history, saying, 'La difficulté de leur métier en faisait des

⁶¹ See MANCERON, 1994, p.29

⁶² See MANCERON, 1994, pp.16 and 33

⁶³ Archives of D.Bretonnet, Moret-sur-Loing

⁶⁴ MANCERON, 1994, p.33

⁶⁵ RAUSOIR, 1888, p.5

hommes rudes.⁶⁶ Despite the harsh exterior of the village's population they are described as a proud and noble people. Clément, for example, wrote in 1900,

Cette population est, dans sa généralité, meilleure que sa réputation... Ces braves gens disent d'eux mêmes: "Nous sommes *criards* (j'adoucis l'expression) mais nous ne sommes pas méchants!" C'est parfaitement exact. Nous rencontrons partout, dans la paroisse, l'accueil le plus cordial.⁶⁷

This description is perhaps more consistent with the way that Sisley portrayed the Saint-Mammès community. In the paintings, however, there is no allusion to or admission of the negative aspects of the village's character whatsoever. Seeing his works, for example, Sisley's friend the critic Gustave Geffroy referred to 'the peaceful Saint-Mammès'.⁶⁸ Although he chose to paint the working village rather than the more popular local motifs, his interpretation of it is particularly flattering as he developed his own picturesque ideal. Rather than showing what in reality might have appeared as a harsh lifestyle of hard toil and rowdy cafés, the Saint-Mammès paintings represented a comforting instant of rustic conviviality for the Parisian home. As described by the critic Jean de Nivelle at the 7th Impressionist exhibition in 1882, '...un moment de distraction heureux pour lui et pour le visiteur.' Sisley's departure from conventional motifs and stereotypes is clear; however, the nature of the views he selected still seems to betray a rather Parisian perspective.

Other familiar themes and ideas also emerge. Although his village motif did not represent an agricultural community, for example, the concept of the community living and working in harmony with the natural environment is strongly apparent. The river has a pervading presence in both the narrative and iconography of nearly all his paintings of Saint-Mammès. Most of his depictions of the village revolve around the streets which overlook the water: the quai du Loing with its lock, and the quai de Seine with the place de la Bosse jutting out into

⁶⁶ REGNAULT, 1991, p.95

⁶⁷ CLÉMENT, 1985, p.172

⁶⁸ Geffroy, G., *La Vie Artistique*, Vol.3, Paris 1894, pp.282-283, cited by Lloyd, C., "Alfred Sisley and the Purity of Vision", in STEVENS, 1992, pp.5-34 at 31

the confluence. Its role is also intrinsic in respect of composition. The paintings of the quai de Seine, for instance, often show views looking along the bank with the houses to one side and the river to the other. *Soleil du matin à Saint-Mammès*, 1884 (fig.152), is one example. Here the viewer is most conscious of the land between the houses and the water and the people with their boat and fishing rod encroaching on the water's edge; representative perhaps of a progression between the domestic resting place on land and the day's activity on the river. Some of the more distant views make this point just as clearly. In *Saint-Mammès, le matin*, 1881 (fig.153), for example, the strata of the horizontal composition combine buildings, boats and river, again implying the transition of man from land to water and possibly the commencement of activity at the start of the day. The river Seine was an important feature in Sisley's paintings from throughout his career. However, in contrast to the scenes of leisure on the river at Argenteuil, or the heavily industrial views of Suresnes, the Saint-Mammès pictures incorporate elements of both. All aspects of life appear to revolve around the river. Whereas other artists might have depicted the essence of a community as convergent on the church, in Sisley's paintings of Saint-Mammès it appears to be the river which fulfils this role.

In a similar way, the river also contributes to a strong sense of social structure. Just as some artists depicted the apex of the church spire surrounded by the homes of peasant labourers and their fields; in Sisley's paintings the houses and inhabitants of Saint-Mammès gravitate to the water. Richard Shone argues, 'there is no sense... of a highly organised agrarian community,' in Sisley's rural paintings.⁶⁹ While this may be true of his paintings of the countryside surrounding Veneux-Nadon and Les Sablons, the argument is overturned with regard to the paintings of Saint-Mammès and the lifestyle surrounding the barges. Both male and female roles within the working community are depicted repeatedly and fit neatly into the traditional social stereotypes. While the paintings of barges and boatyards, such as

⁶⁹ SHONE, 1992, p.142

Chantier à Saint-Mammès, 1885 (fig.154), designate the strictly masculine working domain, others give a view of more feminine aspects of the community. In *Cour de ferme à Saint-Mammès*, 1884 (fig.155), for instance, the women sit processing some form of crop. Although they appear to be contributing to the industrious process of the community, they are neatly confined in a female group within the space of the courtyard. Similarly, in *Vieilles maisons à Saint-Mammès, automne*, the scene is rather domestic with a woman hanging washing between the trees on the right, and a young girl, visually confined to the threshold, leaning on the wall at the top of the steps. She appears to be speaking to the men on the street as they head off to work, one with a wheelbarrow.

In the instances where the women leave the threshold in the Saint-Mammès paintings, they too are linked to the river but in the strictly feminine role of laundrywomen. *Laveuses près de Champagne*, 1882 (fig.156), for example, shows the laundrywomen on the inside bend of the Seine, with Saint-Mammès and the confluence on the opposite bank in the distance. It was also common to see women doing laundry near the bridge on the quai de Seine, as described by one local,

Il y avait des femmes qui lavaient pour le (beau) monde et se faisaient payer.
Elles descendaient de la Grande Rue avec leur brouette, leur boîte à laver, leur
bac à linge, leur linge, leur battoir pour taper le linge...⁷⁰

According to Manceron, the women used to stop people from walking on the grass where they would stretch out their sheets to dry.⁷¹ This explains the white patches on the banks to the right of the church in *Le pont à Saint-Mammès*, 1881 (figs.157 and 158); and one can identify the brown and white spots by the river, below the church, as the laundrywomen in their white caps as they bend down to the water. These women are visible in several of

⁷⁰ Mammèsien quoted in MANCERON, 1994, p.32

⁷¹ MANCERON, 1994, p.32

Sisley's paintings of the quai de Seine, mostly as small background features adding to the sense of activity in the village community.

Sisley's simplified, but highly expressive manner of portraying figures is integral to his depiction of Saint-Mammès as a community. Often strategically placed, one can define at first glance the figures' class of dress, whether they are male or female, and what they are doing. Nonetheless, the knowledge regarding the person does not breach the boundary of individuality. The closest Sisley seems to have come to portraying an individual character in the paintings of Saint-Mammès is in two of his five paintings of the place de la Bosse from 1880 (see figs.159 and 160). The same figure with his distinctive hat and cane appears in both paintings, viewed from both in front and behind. Rather than be singled out for the benefit of identifying him as a person, however, his significance lies in creating a marker of continuity between the two paintings. Whereas the colour of the sky contradicts a temporal continuity, this figure confirms the consistence of the location and implies a gradual progression through the space. As with the courtyard scenes, however, Sisley's village paintings appear to stop short of intimacy. No matter to what detail the paintings present the different aspects of communal activity, they are never genre scenes. The artist remains detached, not betraying the slightest personal detail of or emotion in his subjects. The figures he paints are generic Mammésiens, contributing collectively to a social unit and the function of each painting as a whole.

Although the figures were an essential element of Sisley's works, their relevance arose not from their own individual characteristics but from their relationship with the surrounding environment. Through their activity at the water's edge, the featured inhabitants give added significance to the natural landscape, particularly the river. Similarly, they also give meaning to the presence of the village itself. Saint-Mammès appears not simply as a group of buildings arbitrarily placed in a rural setting, but as a living and working community born

from the facets of its location. Although the function of Saint-Mammès was different to the more common motif of the agricultural village, the link which Sisley developed between the village and the surrounding environment was not dissimilar. Whereas the agricultural village often represented a specific set of ideals, the selectivity and coherence of Sisley's subject matter might also imply a specific intention in his narrative. He appears to have viewed Saint-Mammès from a very positive perspective, concentrating on the unity and productivity of the community. He created his own sense of rural idealism and a different form of 'picturesque'.

Why Saint-Mammès?

Sisley's choice to paint Saint-Mammès was clearly a considered one. Not only was he rejecting the artistic conventions of the area, but the fact that he never lived in the village shows his commitment to painting it. From each of his three different places of residence he would have faced a significant walk of about 10 to 20 minutes to get to Saint-Mammès, carrying his equipment. From Veneux-Nadon he would also have had to take the small ferryboat across the mouth of the Loing. It is therefore important to consider the reasons why Sisley chose to paint Saint-Mammès, and his purpose in doing so. With this aim, this section will examine generally why Sisley chose to go to the Moret area, and how his motives for moving there may have been reflected in his work. Then, it will contemplate more specifically his approach to Saint-Mammès in an attempt to pinpoint why he was so interested in painting this small river port, and the perspective from which he perceived it. Although first-hand textual sources are few, it is possible to infer much regarding Sisley's intentions and opinions from both the context in which he was working and the visual accounts rendered in his paintings.

The reasons behind Sisley's decision to move to the Moret area are, in themselves, an important consideration in identifying his artistic intentions; for example, whether his relocation was born from necessity or choice. As suggested by MaryAnne Stevens, his financial situation was probably a major consideration.⁷² Sisley's works were not selling well at this time, nor did they during most of his career. Correspondence between the artist and his creditor Eugène Murer from 1879 and 1880 shows the difficulties Sisley was in, with Murer eventually threatening to send the bailiffs in.⁷³ As Monet had found in moving to the village of Vétheuil just over a year before, rent and living expenses were far cheaper away from the city limits. Sisley wrote to Monet in 1882 saying that the rent of houses in the region varied from 600 to 1000 francs a year, a rent comparable to what the latter had paid in Vétheuil. The state of the artist's health may also have influenced his choice. This was certainly an important factor in 1883 when he moved from Moret to Les Sablons. He explained in a letter to Durand-Ruel, 'Je suis décidé à quitter Moret le plus tôt possible, je ne m'y porte pas bien... Je n'irai du reste pas loin: au Sablons, à un quart d'heure d'ici, mais je serai en meilleur air.'⁷⁴ In this respect, Paris was certainly not a good place to live with its increasing pollution and over-crowding. With hindsight, however, it was probably the artist's own chain-smoking which contributed most to his respiratory problems.

Commentators also suggest artistic incentives for Sisley's move. Like several of the Impressionists, Sisley was strongly influenced by the artists of the *École de 1830*. He had also been to paint the Forest of Fontainebleau with his friends Frédéric Bazille, Claude Monet and Auguste Renoir in 1863. The coincidence of Moret's proximity to the Forest, in particular, has led some writers to describe the artist's work from this time as a return to the

⁷² Stevens, MA., "Sèvres (1877-1880)" in STEVENS & DUMAS, 2002, pp.387-388 at 388

⁷³ Sisley, letter to Murer, 20 June 1879, Bibliothèque d'Art et d'Archéologie, Paris, Fondation Jacques Doucet, no.11851, cited by Cahn, I., "Documentary Chronology" in STEVENS, 1992, pp.259-281 at 267

⁷⁴ Sisley, letter to Durand-Ruel, 24 Aug. 1883, in VENTURI, 1939, p.58

ideals of his formative years.⁷⁵ His interest in painting Saint-Mammès as a working village would certainly correspond with the subject of his submissions to the Salon of 1866: *Rue de Village à Marlotte – près de Fontainebleau* and *Femmes allant au bois – paysage* (figs.161 and 162). The artist's stylistic technique in these two paintings might also be compared with that of Corot.⁷⁶ Contemporary criticism from the 7th Impressionist exhibition also makes comparisons to the work of the École de 1830.⁷⁷ Philippe Burty even stated that Sisley's landscapes were superior to those of Daubigny: 'M. Sisley atteint parfois à toute cette douceur d'aspect que nous a révélée Corot, et parfois... a un ton aussi soutenu mais plus juste que les meilleurs études de Daubigny.'⁷⁸ Stevens makes comparisons to earlier British landscapists.⁷⁹ The parallels between John Constable's paintings of barges on the Stour and Sisley's paintings of barge activity at Saint-Mammès are particularly persuasive. The artist was well known in France, and Sisley may also have seen his works in London when he visited the city in 1874. Certainly, the current popularity of these former artists may well have influenced Sisley's work, both artistically and with a view to the market.

Nonetheless, Sisley's withdrawal from Paris does not appear to have signified a decisive change in his artistic approach. Monet reacted far more to his change of environment – leaving the steaming engines and heavy girders of the Gare Saint-Lazare to paint Vétheuil as a peaceful and secluded rural backwater. In contrast, Sisley seems to have been far more reluctant to relinquish the more active and industrial aspect of the suburban stretches of the Seine that he had been painting previously. The paintings of barges and boatbuilding in

⁷⁵ Stevens, MA., "The Environs of Moret-sur-Loing: By Veneux-Nadon, Les Sablons, Saint-Mammès (1880-1895)" in STEVENS & DUMAS, 2002, pp.391-393 at 391

⁷⁶ See Stevens, MA., "La Celle-Saint-Cloud to Louveciennes: 1865-1875" in STEVENS, 1992, pp.77-148 at 91

⁷⁷ See Frederick Wedmore, "The Impressionists", *Fortnightly Review*, January 1883, XXXIII, pp.75-82, cited by Stevens, MA., "A Painter Between Two Traditions" in STEVENS & DUMAS, 2002, pp. 332-340 at 333

⁷⁸ "Les Aquarellistes, les Indépendants et le cercle des arts libéraux", *La République française*, 8 March 1882, p3, transcribed in BERTSON, 1996, p.382

⁷⁹ e.g. Stevens, MA., "A Painter Between Two Traditions" in STEVENS & DUMAS, 2002, pp. 332-340 at 334-340

Saint-Mammès, in particular, are strongly reminiscent of the interest he showed in river activity at Port-Marly and Sèvres during the 1870s, for example *La Seine à Port Marly – tas de sable*, 1875 (fig.163). This is not to say that Sisley was not inspired by his new rural situation; a significant proportion of his paintings from the early 1880s are of the trees, rivers and fields of the Moret area. Writing to Monet at the end of August 1881 he even sounded disapproving of the work being carried out on the canal; ‘Du côté où je suis, il y avait au moment où je suis venu de fort jolies choses à faire, mais on a fait des travaux pour le canal, abattu des arbres, fait des quais, alignés des berges.’⁸⁰ It is possible that he was considering Monet’s current preference for painting natural subjects. Or perhaps this was Sisley’s reason for selecting to cross the river and paint in Saint-Mammès itself. Nevertheless, the extent to which he painted the village, and the detail with which he depicted it, suggest more than a passing interest – rather, an emphatic fascination with the active community.

Sisley’s curiosity regarding the village is evident in his explorative approach to painting it. Although there are parallels in his work with the more conventional rural and village imagery of the time, the concept of a generalised village ‘motif’ sits uneasily with these pictures. He does not appear to have relied on the viewers’ preconceptions to embellish the content of his works. Instead his paintings make few assumptions and show a process of familiarisation with specific aspects of Saint-Mammès. Monet, in painting Vétheuil, barely painted the interior of the village, more often depicting it as a self-contained decoration to the composition and allowing viewers to apply their own assumptions to what was within. In contrast, it seems that Sisley enjoyed painting amid the bustle of village life, and exploring the workings of his subject. Perhaps more comparable in this sense to Pissarro’s paintings of L’Hermitage, Sisley’s images of Saint-Mammès begin with a close examination of the

⁸⁰ Sisley, letter to Monet, 21 August 1881, published in ‘Sisley’, *Bulletin des expositions*, Galerie d’Art Braun, Paris, 30 Jan.-18 Feb. 1933, p.7, and transcribed by Pomarède, V., “‘Tous ceux qui ont aimé la nature et qui ont senti fortement.’ Alfred Sisley, le rénovateur réservé et résolu du paysage classique” in STEVENS & DUMAS, 2002, pp.60-79 at 78, fn.58

interior mechanics of the community. In doing so, they enrich the significance of the more distant views of the village. In *Saint-Mammès, le matin*, for example, one can decipher the dots on the shore as villagers and the horizontal brushstrokes as barges. In what Stevens terms giving a ‘sense of place’,⁸¹ the amassing of different views of the same location contributes to the wider portrait of the living community.

This process was not random, but built up methodically and progressively. Sisley wrote to his friend Adolphe Tavernier in 1892, ‘Le sujet, le motif, doit toujours être rendu d’une façon simple, compréhensible, saisissante pour le spectateur ... à suivre le chemin que le peintre lui indique et voir tout d’abord ce qui a empoigné l’exécutant.’⁸² The artist appears to have applied this idea throughout his career, as remarked on by a number of art historians. His treatment of Saint-Mammès was no exception. Dominique Brachlianoff discusses Sisley’s use of roads and rivers as a means of inviting the viewer into the space.⁸³ Shone, in his 1992 book, describes how Sisley developed this approach over the course of his career. Stevens also analyses the artist’s paintings in this way, talking about the ‘visual mapping’ of his progression through the space.⁸⁴ With regard to Saint-Mammès, it is his views of the village from across the river which are recognised most as demonstrating this approach.⁸⁵ They depict the length of the quai de Seine in four different segments: for example in *Saint-Mammès, le matin*; the two *Vue de Saint-Mammès* (figs.164 and 165); and *Le pont à Saint-Mammès*, all painted in 1881. Considering the rest of his Saint-Mammès landscapes, however, one finds some more striking examples, with very small areas painted several times from different angles and distances. One example is the set of paintings depicting the place

⁸¹ Stevens, MA., “A Painter Between Two Traditions” in STEVENS & DUMAS, 2002, pp.332-340 at 339

⁸² Sisley, letter to Tavernier, January 1892, transcribed in SHONE, 1992, pp.217-218

⁸³ Brachlianoff, D., “The Early Years (1860-1870)” in STEVENS & DUMAS, 2002, pp.358-359 at 359

⁸⁴ Stevens, MA., “La Celle-Saint-Cloud to Louveciennes: 1865-1875” in STEVENS, 1992, pp.77-148 at 79

⁸⁵ e.g. Stevens, MA., “The Environs of Moret-sur-Loing: By Veneux-Nadon, Les Sablons, Saint-Mammès (1880-1895)” in STEVENS & DUMAS, 2002, pp.391-393 at 391

de la Bosse and its boatyard, where the viewer can track the artist's short movements up the street and around the site (figs.159, 160 and 166-168). Sisley was clearly fascinated by this spot. This group of works was among the first he painted in the area and he returned to paint there several times during the following five years.⁸⁶

It was here that he began his portrayal of Saint-Mammès, committing himself to the repeated depiction and development of a particular location. In these paintings the role of the river is less evident as his initial emphasis appears to have been on the link between the active community, nature and the produce of the land. With the large chestnut tree always central to the composition, the viewpoint shifts between the houses, the people on the street, and the worksite. The artist shows the wood in its various stages of process, through tree-trunks, sawdust, planks, and in another *Saint-Mammès, le matin* (fig.167), into a boat. In all of these paintings the perspectival effect formed by the piles of wood and the houses leads to the central tree – as if to indicate the origin of activity and the foundation of Saint-Mammès' existence. What is apparent, from these early paintings in particular, is that even considering each work singly one can also track Sisley's train of thought. Much of the imagery that Sisley used implies some form of progression or transition. In his paintings of the quai du Loing, for example, it is less easy to identify a systematic 'mapping'; what is more evident is the various stages in the process of boat building and the movement of the barges. *Saint-Mammès, Canal du Loing*, 1885 (fig.169), for instance, leads the eye past the planks, the boat being repaired on dry land, and then the barges sitting in the water.

Considered from an artistic perspective, Sisley's interest in aspects of transience would certainly confirm his Impressionist ideals. Both Shone and Christopher Lloyd have discussed

⁸⁶ e.g. DAULTE, 1959, cat.nos.547,548, 621 and 622

this point in respect of the artist's treatment of light and reflection on water.⁸⁷ Sisley himself wrote to Tavernier describing these effects, '... cette eau du Loing si belle, si transparente, si changeante...'⁸⁸ As well as the stylistic impression, however, such ideas are also essential to his depiction of Saint-Mammès as a barge community. The boatyards, for example, show a transitional stage in the barges' production, and the boats themselves indicate movement, itinerancy and allude to other places and destinations. In some of the later Loing paintings the combination of these transitory elements appears all the more evident where the emphasis is on the water, the sky and the boats. *Sur le Loing à Saint-Mammès*, 1885 (fig.170), is an example. The tangible aspects of the land and buildings become peripheral in framing the effect of a changing moment – the colours in the sky, the reflections in the water, and the boats which arrive and depart on its surface.

The composition of the Saint-Mammès works also contributes to the concept of movement and change in motioning the viewer through the landscape. His systematic method of building up an image of the village through several paintings, for instance, means that few scenes are self-contained. In many the houses continue past the edges of the canvas and the river flows in and out of the composition. In street scenes such as *Matin de juin*, 1884 (fig.171), for example, the path leading into the painting goes through and past the village to an indefinite destination. Arguably, however, this also creates a sense of personal detachment. Despite Sisley's apparent liking of the place and his detailed analysis of the functioning community, the implied movement of both the viewer and subject conveys the perspective of a visitor rather than an inhabitant. The viewers that were to 'suivre le chemin que le peintre lui indique' were not the local Mammésiens, but the genteel bourgeoisie of Paris discovering the place for the first time.

⁸⁷ See SHONE, 1992, p.129; and Lloyd, C., "Marly-le-Roi and Sèvres: 1875-1880" in STEVENS, 1992, pp.149-182 at 149

⁸⁸ Letter to Tavernier, 19 January 1892, transcribed in SHONE, 1992, p.216

The constant allusions to travel, both of the river community and the viewer, seem to lead to Paris as the conclusion of thought and journey. Although distanced from urban turmoil, Sisley's often still and tranquil paintings offer a reassuring reminder of the accessibility and influence of the city. In *Environs de Saint-Mammès*, 1880 (fig.172), for example, the barges float in convoy away from Saint-Mammès down the Seine to their next destination – Paris. With the Seine as the main artery of France, the barges provide the link to its heart. His portrayal of the village would have been quite distinct from those by other artists depicting the savage, backward and exotic nature of more distant provinces such as Brittany. Instead, Sisley chose to develop the image of the structured working community, further idealised by its setting on the tranquil outskirts of the Ile de France and safely contained within the civilising influence of the capital. While this may have been an attempt to pander to his Parisian market, such efforts would have been counteracted by his resistance to artistic convention. Rather than a measure of his audience, therefore, these paintings of Saint-Mammès are perhaps more reflective of Sisley's own status there as a Parisian outsider, and the ideals which Saint-Mammès inspired in him.

A Republican ideal

Particularly in the context of the issues discussed in this thesis, Sisley's paintings of Saint-Mammès seem quite definite in the values they express. Like many paintings of working villages, for example, the references to productivity and social structure are clear. His imagery appears to contain little nostalgia, however, and there are few references to the rustic backwardness often associated with rural communities. Their emphasis seems very much on the contemporary and to some extent the progressive. Especially when coupled with the rather centralist allusions to Paris, many aspects of these paintings might be

perceived as consistent with specifically Republican ideals. The canals and waterways, for example, were significantly affected by the Republican policy of the time to improve the national communications network. The activity that resulted from the works would certainly have had a strong visual impact on the Saint-Mammès landscape. This section will therefore consider whether Sisley was simply painting what he saw, or whether his choice to paint the village was an expression of his own Republican sentiments.

Sisley is generally thought not to have been partisan-minded, for example, Philip Nord in his book *Impressionists and Politics* barely mentions the artist, apart from to say ‘Sisley, to all appearances had no politics at all, ...’⁸⁹ Shone feels that it is ‘inconceivable that Sisley would have made any political point in his paintings,’ stating ‘... they are almost arrogantly aloof from any such message.’⁹⁰ Such views are perhaps encouraged by the lack of textual evidence regarding Sisley’s first-hand opinions, as well as his personal distancing from the subject matter. However, other commentators have been more receptive in considering the possibility of political or didactic implications in the artist’s works. Richard Thomson, for example, has argued that Sisley’s *La Seine au Point-du-Jour, le quatorze juillet, 1873* (fig.173), did in fact depict the Palais du Trocadéro on the 30th of June 1878, when a national holiday was declared to celebrate the Exposition Universelle. He suggests the painting may have reflected the political views of the painter or his patron in showing the success of the Republic’s revitalisation of France after the hardships of 1870-71.⁹¹ Stevens also discusses the presence of political connotations with regard to Sisley’s paintings of Marly-le-Roi from 1875 and 1876, which she calls ‘historically loaded’. She interprets the paintings of the Moret area, however, as a more personal emotional response to a particular venue.⁹² Nevertheless, in his review of the 7th Impressionist exhibition, which featured several of

⁸⁹ See NORD, 2000, p.23

⁹⁰ SHONE, 1992, p.90

⁹¹ THOMSON, R., 1981, p.676

⁹² Stevens, MA., “La Celle-Saint-Cloud to Louveciennes: 1865-1875” in STEVENS, 1992, pp.77-148 at 83

these works, De Nivelle referred to Sisley as 'l'homme de parti-pris'.⁹³ The artist may therefore have presented a more opinionated personality than is now acknowledged. From the start the Impressionists had taken on a somewhat Republican ideology with their radical ideas on art and their passion for painting modern subjects. There is little to show that Sisley was not party to this mentality.

At the time that Sisley first began to paint Saint-Mammès in 1880, Jules Grévy's Opportunist Republic had been in power for little more than a year. After the conservative regime of Marshal MacMahon it was a time of great change as the new administration began to implement its plans for the nation. Dubbed by some the 'Republican's Republic',⁹⁴ it would have been a time of optimism for supporters of the Republican cause. The positive effects of the new policies being introduced would have been clearly evident in Saint-Mammès, particularly in respect of the Freycinet plan. This large-scale reform of the French communications network involved not only the modernisation of the roads and railways, but also the renovation of the French system of waterways. With regard to the waterways, the competition of the railways would eventually become too much, and despite the modernisation, the barges were too slow and the rivers too unpredictable for the demands of modern France. When Sisley first moved to the Moret area, however, the developments of the Freycinet plan would have been in their infancy. Indeed, the work being carried out on the canal, which Sisley spoke of to Monet, would have been related to the State project. It would have created work for canal workers and optimism among barge communities. What is more, now that Ferry was encouraging the painting of modern subjects, Republican policy also appeared to endorse the depiction of such scenes on canvas.

⁹³ Nivelle, J. de, "Les Peintres indépendants", *Le Soleil*, 4 March 1882, pp.1-2, transcribed in BERSON, 1996, p.406

⁹⁴ e.g. See TOMBS, 1996, p.442

As well as representing Sisley's response to his visual environment, the paintings of Saint-Mammès would also have been an optimistic reflection of the political and social context in which he was working. While this sense of enthusiasm may have arisen in part from the artistic opportunities which the artist found in moving to a new area, it emerges more specifically as a distinct characteristic of this working community. The light effects alone project positive connotations. Both the time of day and season of the Saint-Mammès paintings allude to beginnings and anticipation. Many have 'matin' in the title, and paintings such as *Vielles maisons à Saint-Mammès*, for example, show the beginning of the working day. The more distant *Vue de Saint-Mammès* (fig.165) also shows the landscape glistening with the early morning sun. The critic Arsène Alexandre described Sisley's paintings saying, 'They are all covered in a blond light, and all is gaiety, clarity, springlike festivity...'⁹⁵ However, in painting the boatyards and the general activity of the Saint-Mammès community, Sisley was also illustrating the prosperity and productivity which had arisen as a result of Republican policy. The Mammésiens themselves would certainly not have been adverse to State investment toward their livelihood. Clément explained in 1900, 'Pour nous qui n'avons pas de préférences pour un régime plus que pour un autre, le meilleur gouvernement, quelque soit le nom dont il se décore, est celui qui fait le mieux les affaires du pays.'⁹⁶

Although Sisley does not appear to have painted the reconstruction of the canal itself, the activity which stemmed from it is clearly evident in several of his early paintings of the area. The paintings entitled *Chantier à Saint-Mammès*, showing the place de la Bosse, depict what was the Leveau boatyard. According to Manceron, it was installed on the place in 1880, so would have been brand new when the artist painted it.⁹⁷ The standardisation of the canals

⁹⁵ (preface to *Galerie Durand-Ruel, recueil d'estampes* unpublished) cited in Durand-Ruel Godfroy, C., "Paul Durand-Ruel and Alfred Sisley" in STEVENS, 1992, pp.35-54 at 36

⁹⁶ CLÉMENT, 1900, p165

⁹⁷ MANCERON, 1994, p.23

which the Freycinet plan had brought about meant that the size of barges could now also be standardised, creating a source of work for the boatyards featured in Sisley's paintings.

Manceron explains that the traditional *Berrichon* barge (27.5 x 2.62m; 55-60 tonnes) could now be replaced by a *Freycinet* (32.5 x 5.10m; 350 tonnes) which had a larger capacity but was the right size to fit through all the canals in France.⁹⁸ In addition, the building slightly further down the quai de Seine that Sisley also painted several times, for example in *Paysage près de Moret*, 1884 (fig.174) was also a product of late-nineteenth-century river development. According to local reminiscences, it was where a large chain was anchored which stretched along the riverbed towards Paris. It was introduced so that specially equipped steam tugs or *toueurs* could pull themselves and a convoy of barges mechanically along a set course, avoiding the dangers that river navigation could produce. Described by Regnault: 'Ce modernisme apporte un nouveau genre de vie à Saint-Mammès parmi les marinières. C'est en effet à Saint-Mammès que la traction changeait; animale sur le canal, à vapeur à la Seine.'⁹⁹

Other aspects of Sisley's iconography also contribute more subtly to connoting this rather progressive rural ideal. Particularly in the earlier paintings of Saint-Mammès, for example, there are often resounding allusions to aspects denoting continuity, regeneration and progress. As well as the optimistic images of construction, the chestnut tree and the wood in the boatyard paintings implies a renewable process. Similarly, Sisley depicted the process of time, for example in *Jour de brouillard à Saint Mammès*, 1880 (fig.175). On the right are houses on the bank, in front of which men are chopping down some dying poplars so that they can be replaced to look like the lush green ones behind. The freshly stripped trunks lie next to piles of dead foliage, with a cart waiting to remove them. To the left is the river where a steam tug, some barges and a rowing boat sit in the water. Both in the boats and the

⁹⁸ MANCERON, 1994, pp.47-48 and 75-76

⁹⁹ REGNAULT, 1991, p.91

trees, with the man-made as with nature, one sees the different stages of transition between old and new. There are also references to the continuity of the generations, for instance, in *Vieilles maisons à Saint-Mammès* with the daughter on the steps, the mother hanging washing and the father going to work. Parents with their children also appear in a number of paintings. In *Matin de juin*, for instance, a woman walks along the street with a young child.

Progress is shown not in a strong urban and industrial sense but in the prosperity of a modest rural community. Distant from the reaches of the expanding suburban sprawl, but within the civilising sphere of Parisian influence, the Saint-Mammès landscapes succinctly contradict any preconceptions of rustic savagery and backwardness. As well as the structured working community, for example, the natural environment in which Saint-Mammès is situated is strictly controlled and exploited by man. The trees are planted in rows and the horizons marked by houses; the river is harnessed by locks, weirs and canals. The introduction of modern technology to the area is also evident. Shone has argued that Sisley deliberately avoided painting the Schneider Factory which transformed the village of Champagne, on the opposite side of the Seine to Saint-Mammès.¹⁰⁰ He is, however, mistaken as to the date of the factory's construction which occurred in 1903, after the artist's death. On the contrary, it was the more the historic sites that Sisley omitted to paint during this period in the early 1880s. It is wrong to assume that these works ignored the effects of modernity simply because they do not depict an urban environment. The appearance of the railway viaduct in the background of paintings such as *Le Loing à Saint-Mammès*, 1886 (fig.176), for instance, does not look out of place; neither does the steam tug in *Jour de brouillard à Saint Mammès*. Sisley portrayed Saint-Mammès as a rural working village which was at once traditional and contemporary; his own interpretation of an established ideal adapted to modern values.

¹⁰⁰ SHONE, 1992, p.134

Related ideas, such as the rural escape from urban disarray, also appear in the artist's other paintings of the area. As in *Bords de la Seine à By*, 1881 (fig.177), where Sisley's daughter is pictured wandering along the banks of the Seine near Veneux-Nadon, the allusion to *villégiature* is strong. Again, however, the image is unequivocally contemporary, and the reference to the Parisian bourgeoisie direct. Equally, in his interpretation of the motif of the working village, the structured and traditional community assumes a position of significance within its contemporary context. Through its activity it is seen to benefit from Republican policy and contribute constructively to the building of the modern nation. The political resonance of Sisley's iconography during this period appears all the more convincing when one considers another of Karbowsky's murals for the Mairie de Nogent-sur-Marne painted in 1889 (fig.178). *Le repos et la navigation* is particularly reminiscent of the Saint-Mammès paintings, with its barge-workers; mothers with their children; the railway viaduct in the background; as well as the recreational activities of some of the figures.

Sisley's works from the surrounding countryside are perhaps more ambiguous. Many, such as *Les dernières feuilles d'automne*, 1883 (fig.179), depict a far wilder natural environment where untamed nature engulfs the composition. The seasonal moods are also more variable than the consistently sanguine spring and summer landscapes of Saint-Mammès. A number of explanations may be proffered in considering these works. In varying his subjects, for example, Sisley may have been attempting to offer more choice to his reluctant market. It is also possible that for practical reasons, when the weather was inclement or incompatible with the vision of Saint-Mammès Sisley wished to create, that he experimented with alternative sites. It is also possible that he was influenced by Monet's enthusiasm at this time for painting 'natural' nature. Equally, he may on occasion have been seeking personal solitude, retreating from the broader issues of life to contemplate his subject in isolation. If one interprets a political or social intent, however, as in the Saint-Mammès paintings, the connotations seem rather poignant. In *Les dernières feuilles d'automne*, for example, the

rooftops of Les Sablons in the background emerge amid the dying foliage as if neglected by Republican civilisation. For the agricultural factions of the local community, this was not such an optimistic time. Agriculture was increasingly suffering, not only from economic recession, but also the devastating effects of phylloxera on the vineyards. In the Moret area, where the livelihood of most of the village communities depended on the vines, particularly the Chasselas grapes, the crop never recovered. Rausoir described the effects on Saint-Mammès saying, 'En 1888 la récolte en vin est complètement nulle.'¹⁰¹ The paintings of the overgrown countryside were possibly a reflection of the vineyards and fields that no longer served a purpose and had been left to lie fallow. By the mid-1880s the flaws in the Freycinet plan had also become apparent, having failed to stave off recession and creating large amounts of debt after extravagant and ill-planned public spending. What is more, in addition to the waterways, it had invested significantly in the railway network, the speed and reliability of which gradually replaced the barges' role in the freight industry. In Saint-Mammès, therefore, the optimism instilled by State investment would have been short-lived.

It certainly seems that the political optimism conveyed in the early Saint-Mammès paintings, inspired by the industrious barge community in the early 1880s, was not unwavering. There appears to have been a distinct shift in Sisley's artistic aims around the mid-to-late 1880s. It was perhaps indicative of an alteration in his political and social sentiments. Although his enthusiasm for painting the barges is still evident in these later works, they seem to become more distanced and less active. Paintings such as *Garage de bateaux à Saint-Mammès*, painted in 1885 (fig.180), form a compelling contrast to the bustling activity of the earlier paintings of the quai de Seine and the place de la Bosse. With no figures, and the numerous barges moored up in rows against the sparse riverbank, this painting captures in appearance and mood what the Mammésiens knew as *le chômage*. Among the barge community the term was often used to describe periods when the bargemen could not work due to the river being

¹⁰¹ RAUSOIR, 1888, p.4

too low or too high to permit safe passage. The more general sense of the word, to mean longer term unemployment, however, would seem just as appropriate. Even in Sisley's stylistic technique, the landscape appears as diffuse as his brushstrokes, and the village itself seems to dissipate into the background, as if to imply the fading of the community. The artist may also have felt a resonance between the inactivity of the scene and the paucity of sales in his own work after painting the Republican ideal. A letter from Pissarro to Monet, for example, described Sisley's one man exhibitions in 1883, 'Mon exposition n'a rien fait comme entrée. ... Quant à l'exposition de Sisley, c'est encore plus mauvais; rien rien.'¹⁰² Somewhat ironically, in 1888 it was one of Sisley's landscapes which was the first impressionist painting to be bought by the State.¹⁰³ It was, however, the rather benign and rustic scene of *Matinée de septembre*, c.1887 (fig.181), which was chosen and not one the more progressive images of Saint-Mammès.

In the late 1880s, as Sisley began to concentrate his work on scenes from in and around Moret, the narrative structure of the humble working community began to disappear from his work. Gone too were the elements of regeneration, construction and progress, which had been so vivid in the earlier paintings. Those works that he did paint of Saint-Mammès at this time appear to withdraw to a more neutral perspective and resolve in the aesthetic effects of light and reflection, for example in *Sur le Loing à Saint-Mammès*. In his Moret landscapes there was a gradual acceptance of the more widely recognised 'picturesque' and historic sites that he had once considered 'dessus-de-tabatière'. *Moret-sur-Loing, la Porte de Bourgogne*, 1891 (fig.182), for example, makes a feature of the medieval gatehouse and church.

It is possible that this change in his work was due to a number of commercial incentives. By making his work less controversial he may have hoped to appeal to a wider audience. He

¹⁰² Pissarro to Monet, 12 June 1883, transcribed in BAILLY-HERZBERG, 1980-1991, I, letter 158

¹⁰³ See HOUSE, 1996, p.282

may also have been reacting to his change of dealer; disassociating himself from the patronage of Durand-Ruel, he defected to the more conservative Petit as his sole agent. François Daulte's catalogue raisonné also lists one of Sisley's paintings of the Loing from 1885 being bought by Arnold & Tripp, who was the main agent for the academic traditionalist Harpignies.¹⁰⁴ In the 1890s Sisley also began to exhibit in the Salon on the Champ de Mars. It seems, however, that Sisley's withdrawal from politics and controversy also extended to his personal life. John Rewald has discussed Sisley's retreat from the Parisian art world in *The History of Impressionism*.¹⁰⁵ The artist's abstention from the dispute over institutionalised anti-Semitism, which surrounded the Dreyfus affair in 1897, is given as one example. While Sisley remained tacit in Moret, several of the artist's former friends and colleagues such as Émile Zola, Claude Monet, Camille Pissarro, Auguste Renoir, Edgar Degas and Paul Cézanne, all took active roles in the debate.¹⁰⁶ Equally, in an interview with Tavernier, published in *L'Art Français* in 1893, Sisley preferred to acknowledge members of the École de 1830 as his favourite contemporary artists rather than his impressionist peers.¹⁰⁷

The enthusiastic scenes of village industry had gradually given way to a setting where the pace of life was slower and the landscape more tranquil. The controversial Parisian artist had become a passive and settled Morétain. Echoing the changes in the artist's own life, the evolution of his iconography was a detailed reflection of his own physical and social environment as well as his attitudes towards it. Sisley's move to Moret appears to have signified a commitment to his locality and a shrugging off of the politicism of impressionist influence. While continuing the stylistic traditions of the group, his work from after 1885

¹⁰⁴ See DAULTE, 1956, cat.no.614

¹⁰⁵ REWALD, 1980, p.576

¹⁰⁶ See also NORD, 2000, pp.100-107

¹⁰⁷ See Tavernier, A., "Sisley", *L'Art Français*, 18 March 1893, cited in REWALD, 1980, p.576

appears to have lost the more opinionated elements of his earlier convictions, allowing him to be absorbed by nature and the unashamed rural beauty of his setting.

Conclusion

The general prevalence of the working village motif in Third Republic landscape paintings was a significant marker of the social and political climate. The moral and social ideals encapsulated by the long-established community, working together in harmony with the land, held widespread appeal for a nation discontent with its current condition. While strong in its simplicity, the popularity of the motif was founded on the variety of levels at which it could be appreciated. In both religious and secular terms, in domestic and national contexts, it constituted a potent symbol of unity, continuity and devotion. It is unsurprising, therefore, that among its many applications it became a subject for Republican iconography and a model to which the nation should aspire.

Sisley's paintings represented what was essentially a Republican village, in that they depicted a contemporary community which had evolved under modern State policy. In these works the traditional rural community was placed in a modern context and shown benefiting directly from the investment of the Freycinet plan. Saint-Mammès was depicted not as a remote anachronism but as a real place playing an integral role in the developing nation. The resonance of these works appears to have been lost on the common majority, however, as reflected by his sales. Alexandre Hepp wrote in response to the 7th Impressionist exhibition in 1882, 'Pissarro et Sisley sont des maîtres, - des maladroits qui ne savent pas vendre et que j'aime.'¹⁰⁸ The originality and contemporary nature of Sisley's style and subject matter

¹⁰⁸ Hepp, A., "Impressionnisme", *Le Voltaire*, 3 March 1882, p.3, transcribed in BERSON, 1996, p.394

departed provocatively from convention and would have distracted from the subtlety of his poeticism. Although he depicted many of the values present in more typical interpretations of the motif, the setting in which he placed them was overly real. To most, the Saint-Mammès landscapes would have acted more as an observational record rather than conjuring the picturesque ideal that bourgeois society demanded. The working village was not to be a depiction of existing rural France but an idealised social model to which the urban and educated classes could aspire. The focus of the motif lay largely in the nostalgia of the past and the aspirations of the future, not in the changing reality of the present. Even as a Republican symbol, the significance of the working village lay in its timelessness and constancy, not its evolution and change.

Chapter Five

The Village at Rest

Besides being a place of human activity, it is also important to examine the role of the village as a unified structural entity in itself. In addition to the notion of the functioning social group, the motif was also characterised by buildings with their own significance. Comprised mostly of houses and farmsteads, it represented the focus of rural life and the home of the peasant inhabitants. A natural complement to the working landscape which surrounded it, the village signified a place of comfort, security and rest. A variety of meanings and associations may be developed from such notions. Again, the theory of the 'refuge' is highly relevant.¹ The basic concepts of shelter and protection are certainly valid within the context of nineteenth century French imagery, and appear in different guises with regard to paintings of the village. Whereas in reality the structure of the village provided shelter from nature, however, in its artistic context it was perhaps more significant as a sanctuary from modern urban life.

Many of the rural landscapes admired by the Parisian bourgeoisie at this time were in some way linked to a general idea of either physical or psychological rest, particularly those featuring small rustic villages. In describing the Salon landscape paintings of 1889 Lafenestre wrote,

*Aimez-vous les sites familiers et calmes, les campagnes françaises, sans violents accidents de terrains, sans étranges effets de lumière, dont tout le charme est dans les nuances délicates, dans la délicieuse variété des formes et des couleurs, si on les analyse avec sincérité et avec amour?*²

¹ APPLETON, 1996, p.92

² LAFENESTRE, 1889, p.32

The simplicity that many artists and critics associated with the French countryside acted in some ways as a remedy to the anxieties of war and the social weariness affected by the modern urban environment. As discussed in previous chapters, the significance of escapism was pervading and manifested itself in a number of different ways. The relative inactivity displayed by images of peasants dawdling through villages, for example, was more a reference to urban desires for a slower pace of life than to rural reality. Yet by painting the village as a place of quietude artists were not only catering to a taste for temporary visual tourism. Particularly toward the end of the 1880s, as the connotations regarding village iconography accumulated, the motif was used to express a variety of profound and emotive effects.

The rural peace and tranquillity offered by the motif was often tempered by the more evocative implications of nostalgia. Counter to the customary optimism of the active community were the quiet scenes depicting the ‘poetic melancholy’ of the inactive village. Concerns regarding the effects of rural depopulation and agricultural recession were growing, and sentiments were increasingly protective of peasant communities and their traditions. It was perhaps inevitable, therefore, that some village imagery would express a level of poignancy. Whereas the idea of the evening return to the community may have had reassuring connotations, the dormant or inactive village could equally represent lifelessness and desertion. In exploring such nuances this chapter will consider both the positive and negative constructions of the village at rest, and attempt to situate them within the national conscience. As a corollary, it will also examine the significance of time and season in contributing to the overall effect and meaning of each painting. To conclude, a case study will assess Jean-Charles Cazin’s crepuscular treatment of the village motif and his intensifying of meaning through the exclusion of activity and detail.

'La rentrée'

It is clear that the sense of familiarity associated with the compact and unified community held strong appeal amid the anonymity of the urban sprawl. Exploited by a number of artists, the notion of return – *la rentrée* – was effective in emphasising the feeling of belonging. The concept appears often in the titles of paintings and forms a narrative for many more. Auguste Lepère's *Pleine lune à la moisson*, 1885 (fig.183), is a good example, where the artist exploits the idea in a number of ways. The fact that the figures are returning home to rest after their implicitly strenuous work already suggests the comfort which awaits them. As well as establishing a link between the working land and the village as a place of repose, the figures in the painting are instrumental in creating a sense of familiarity and unity. The combination of man, or boy, woman and child might suggest different members of a larger family unit. As the viewer's eye is drawn into the painting, he may even perceive a role in the group himself as he is invited to follow the three villagers down the path. In addition, the smoke rising from the chimney of the house they are heading towards evokes the warmth of the hearth and perhaps the prospect of the evening meal. It also hints at the *veillée* – the evening gatherings of families and friends. This was a popular theme in peasant genre scenes particularly. Léon Lhermitte's Salon painting, *La veillée*, 1888 (fig.184), is a well-known example. Certainly, in many of the paintings to be considered in this chapter, what viewers imagined to be happening inside the houses was as important as their outward appearance. Both the outward and inward prospects of Lepère's compact community would have involved the viewer in a calming vision of social harmony. Furthermore, the element of 'return' could reinforce in his mind the possibility of going back to this form of community lifestyle from the confusion of the urban environment.

A general tone of nostalgia is an emphatic aspect of numerous village landscape paintings, arguably more so in the later ones. It is evident that many French attitudes during the 1870s

and 1880s were far from progressive, particularly when considering artistic imagery. Even in the work of artists who were highly progressive stylistically, views of rural areas were predominantly retrospective in their values. Both Monet and Gauguin, for instance, whose radical styles depicted optimistic views of their respective villages, still clung to a very traditional and stereotypical perspective. Another example is the work of the group of neo-impressionist artists who painted at the village of Lagny.³ Léo Gausson's portrayal of the village in *Paysage aux environs de Lagny, l'église de Conches-sur-Gondaire*, 1887 (fig.185), is one example. As a evening picture of a village going to rest, his use of rather standard perceptions will be demonstrated by the painting's strong resemblance to many of the illustrations in the remainder of this chapter. Even for those who appeared to embrace modernity in the city, towards the end of the nineteenth century the desire to cling to the village as an icon of the unchanging rural community was prevalent.

Statistically, it would appear that France was less affected by the developments of the industrial revolution than other countries such as Britain and Germany.⁴ Culturally and emotionally, however, with its strong sense of agrarian tradition, the French nation was clearly highly sensitive to such change. A strongly conservative and retrospective mentality coloured not only artistic culture but also areas of business and politics.⁵ After the perils of the Franco-Prussian War, the Commune, and later the agricultural recession, it seems that the longing for stability focussed itself on the retention of the elements of French society which conformed to past ideals. The historian Koenraad Swart has written about the post-war sentiments saying, 'If Frenchmen still talked about the greatness of their nation, they had the past rather than the future in mind.'⁶ He explains such attitudes as a reaction against what

³ See CORET, 1999

⁴ See JONAS, 1991, pp.177-180; and LAW, 1967, p.126, table I

⁵ See MOURRE, 1900, p.52

⁶ SWART, 1964, p.138

was perceived as the results of their own decadence. His argument would certainly support the trend in paintings depicting humble and virtuous peasants and their communities.

Much of the nostalgia was founded on moral concerns, grown from the notion of the wholesome simplicity of peasant life far away from urban corruption. This perception of rural morality had ramifications in both secular and religious society. Normand's passionate discourse for a regional agricultural bulletin in 1876 stated,

Dans le travail de la terre vous trouverez la paix du cœur, un bien-être satisfaisant, et une fortune au moins relative. La prospérité de l'agriculture, la moralité et les grands principes conservateurs qui garantissent notre état social y trouveront aussi leur compte.⁷

Such ideals could appeal equally to both Christian values and to the emerging sense of Republican spirituality promoted by the secular State. Nonetheless, it was the symbol of the village church which was probably most potent in conferring moral structure upon the village motif. The emblematic spire on the horizon was indicative of a moral sanctuary which could offer peace and protection for the troubled urban mind.⁸

The reassurance and protection of this sanctuary is a theme expressed in several paintings. The markedly Christian symbolism of the 'flock' and 'God the shepherd' appears in several paintings. Diéterle's Salon painting *La Valleuse à Criqueboeuf* from 1887 (fig.186), for instance, reflects the shepherded flock against an illuminated village with its spire on the horizon – the links and analogies between the two groupings are evident. Millet's images of flocks of sheep, as in *Parc à moutons, clair de lune*, c.1872-1873 (fig.187), were clearly of resounding influence in encouraging this particular motif. Nevertheless, the emphasis on the connection between the flock and the village is far stronger in later paintings when the

⁷ Normand, (lawyer in Poitiers) "Discours aux cultivateurs", *Bulletin de la Société d'Agriculture de la Vienne*, Poitiers, juillet 1876, transcribed in PITIÉ, 1987, p.70

⁸ See LeBRAS, 1976, p.29

general trend of painting the village community grew more established. The correlation made in Paul Chaigneau's *Crépuscule* (fig.188) is especially clear with the shepherd keeping watch to the right of the sheep – just as the church belfry towers over the houses of the village. As contentions over the church's role in France accumulated, and opinions grew more ardent, this fairly pointed iconography could be interpreted as representing particularly Catholic ideals. Again, the concept of 'return' was used to express a desire to be reconciled with these ideals in reality. The moonlit flock returning to the security of the stable in Hareux's *La rentrée du troupeau à l'étable*, 1890 (fig.189), seems rather spiritual with the shepherdess and the sheep lit up by the moon as if divine. The dominant buildings appear welcoming and protective as the light from the window looks out over the stable gate. The manner in which the artist's perspective is set apart from this group creates an almost envious viewpoint, expressing not only the return of the animals but also instigating a desire to rejoin the flock.

The relevance of the 'return to the flock', or the return of the flock to the community, was not simply an expression of moral sentiment, however, but was also analogous to the rural population. As well as appealing to moral nostalgia, the image of the 'return' was a symptomatic response to the nostalgia felt by those who had left the countryside and moved to the cities. A significant proportion of the *nouveaux- riches* had moved from provincial areas and was now responsible for the boom in private art sales. It seems that many of them were reluctant to appreciate the 'brave new world' around them. A play entitled *Le Village* by Octave Feuillet, first written in 1856 but not staged until years later, is an early illustration of the type of reformed attitude which the urban population appears to have been experiencing.⁹ The story describes a man returning to his native village after spending the past thirty years of his life travelling the world. He is at first disapproving of the apparently monotonous village life of his jealous childhood friend. After an evening of drinking, dining

⁹ FEUILLET, 1915

and reminiscence, however, both are persuaded of the benefits of this secure community existence compared to the hazards faced by the solitary traveller. In reality, the main trend was not so much that villagers were leaving on adventurous excursions around the world, but more to find work in the cities. According to Dupâquier's collection of studies on the French population, most young peasants left with the intention of returning after a short time, when they had accumulated some savings. It became the case, however, that only around half of them would do so.¹⁰ Particularly toward the end of the century, as the rural migrant population augmented, the issue of returning to the countryside would have struck a personal chord with a significant proportion of the urban population.

Now that city-dwellers had more access to the rural areas, a general awareness and concern over the effects of modernity on villages was also increasing. Theuriet's book *La vie rustique* of 1888, was written with precisely the purpose of recording rural life and publicising its plight. Of rural origin himself, he wrote in his introduction, 'Nous avons essayé d'y recueillir pieusement les reliques de ces moeurs, de ces physionomies et de ces paysages qui vont disparaître...'¹¹ The whole work forms an ardent rationale against change. It was feared that unless efforts were made to preserve and encourage continuity of the perceived traditions of rural existence then there would be no villages to return to.

'Le village abandonné'

The issue of rural depopulation was at the root of many people's concerns. Having escalated consistently throughout the century the consequences of rural emigration were now intensifying. Between 1866 and 1891 alone, the rural population decreased by 1 600 000,

¹⁰ Pousseau, J.P.; Courgeau, D.; and Dupâquier, J., "Les migrations intérieures" in DUPÂQUIER et al, 1988, pp.177-197 at 183

¹¹ THEURIET, 1888, p.VIII

about 6.04%, while the urban population rose by 3 480 000, or 30.08% (see graph 1).

Although the developing trends were not as dramatic as those of Britain and Germany, they were significant enough to mark the physiognomy of the French nation. They have since been the subject of a number of publications.¹² The majority of French opinion appears to have been distinctly inhospitable to such changes. An article by Raymond Jonas has recognised a particularly ‘gloomy’ attitude among French reactions, contrasting them against the celebratory tone of an American commentator on rural migration in the United States.¹³ Leagues and associations were established to combat the unsettling trends, patronised by national notables from various allegiances – literary, aristocratic, political and ecclesiastical.¹⁴ The fervour against rural migration was widespread, as is evident in the language used by commentators to describe it. Jean Pitié’s useful annotated bibliography lists some of the expressions used:

... dépopulation des campagnes – abandon des campagnes – désertion rurale – désertion des campagnes – dépopulation agricole – émigration des habitants des provinces – dépeuplement des campagnes – évasion des montagnards – migrations des campagnards vers les villes ; quelques auteurs parlent des « déserteurs des champs », et rêvent des contre-courants sociaux que seraient « le retour à la terre », le « retour aux champs », la « repopulation des campagnes ».¹⁵

The term ‘rural exodus’ or ‘l’exode rurale’ was coined as a familiar term at the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁶ Although slightly after the period being considered here it seems a belated solution in the struggle to express the emotive impact of the phenomenon.

¹² See PITIÉ, 1987; DUPÂQUIER et al, 1988; and MOCH, 1983

¹³ JONAS, 1991, p.177

¹⁴ PITIÉ, 1987, p.65, lists Frédéric Mistral, la duchesse d’Uzès, Jules Méline, and Cardinal Amette respectively.

¹⁵ PITIÉ, 1987, p.64

¹⁶ Pousseau, J.P.; Courgeau, D.; and Dupâquier, J., “Les migrations intérieures” in DUPÂQUIER et al, 1988, pp.177-197 at 181, has sourced the term to England in 1891 and PITIÉ, 1987, p.64 has sourced it to France in 1903.

The art of the time was certainly not impartial to these issues and inevitably, many paintings of rural landscape were a reflection of these deep-seated sentiments. The general and wilful pessimism which Swart associates with the French during this period could indeed be perceived as consistent with some artists' outlook on village communities.¹⁷ Rather than making comforting references to what rural life should be, there was also a more fatalistic contingent which revelled in the nation's melancholy. Hinged against the same iconography that produced images of the inspiring and idealistic working community – the significance of quiet, empty and sometimes dishevelled village streets was emphatically poignant. The role of nostalgia was again key in posing the question as to what was missing and for how long. Bail's Salon painting from 1890, *Une cour de ferme à Champagne (Seine-sur-Oise)* (fig.190), for example, shows an overgrown courtyard and dilapidated buildings. It forms a strong contrast to Sisley's industrious *Cour de ferme à Saint-Mammès* (fig.155). Pelouse's Salon painting *Cernay, près de Rambouillet* (fig.19), is also a good example of this sentiment toward the subject. Examples of such subject matter were not lacking in the French countryside. Pitié's map shows the number of departments and regions which fell victim to significant depopulation during this period (map 10). Jean-Marie Pesez and Emmanuel le Roy Ladurie's analysis of the phenomenon in eighteenth-century France argues that the desertion of villages and hamlets had always been frequent yet little remarked.¹⁸ This was not the case regarding the trend in late-nineteenth-century landscape painting, however. *L'Entrée du village de Cernay* (fig.191), also by Pelouse, for example, might be interpreted as representing migration in progress with its subtle but poignant connotations. Against the setting of a sunlit village in springtime, a heavily-laden woman with her child follows the path leading out of the village into the looming shadow of the foreground. Ominous storm clouds in the distance contrast against the coloured blossom, and the cluster of houses appears to emphasise the apparent isolation of the figures as they move toward the viewer.

¹⁷ SWART, 1964, p.139

¹⁸ Pesez, J.-M., and Le Roy Ladurie, E., "The Deserted Villages of France : An overview" in FORSTER and RANUM, 1977, pp.72 -106 at p.72

Although there is nothing expressly to confirm that their departure is indefinite, there was a strong sensitivity to this common scenario.

Writers such as Theuriet complained that young people's presumptions regarding the benefits of city life were in most cases misguided.¹⁹ They argued that, despite peasants' wishes not to repeat the harsh experiences of their parents, life in the city was no better. They encouraged the idea that staying in the countryside would be far more beneficial and morally rewarding than a life of servitude and corruption in the cities. In reality of course, the truth of such statements was limited. In a number of cases the added effects of agricultural recession made even subsistence impossible. For increasing numbers of villagers there was little choice but to go to the cities.²⁰ Perceived by some as perpetuating recession, there were fears that the lack of man-power in the fields would lead to food shortages – increasing prices and encouraging foreign competitors. The general reception of such anxieties is evident in paintings like Pelouse's *Le soir* (fig.18) where turkeys scratch among the weeds of a field lying fallow. The insertion of farm implements and carts left idle was also a common way of alluding to the disuse and desertion of the fields; for instance in Lavieille's *Crépuscule en Hiver, à Arsy (Oise)*, 1873 (fig.192), and Saintin's, *Neige en novembre*, 1884 (fig.193). This was another motif that had already found resonance in one of Millet's works, *La plaine de Chailly en hiver*, 1862 (fig.194), and was once again given a role within later paintings of villages. It may be reasoned that the imagery presented a temporary respite and that the plough would be taken up again soon once the ground thawed. There was also the inference, however, that perhaps the break from the soil was as permanent as the image itself.

¹⁹ See THEURIET, 1888, pp.255 and 266; and Normand, (avocat à Poitiers), "Discours aux cultivateurs", *Bulletin de la Société d'Agriculture de la Vienne*, Poitiers, July 1876, transcribed in PITIÉ, 1987, p.70

²⁰ See PITIÉ, 1987, p.71; and Cère, P., *Les populations dangereuses et les misères sociales*, E. Dentu, Paris, 1872, transcribed in PITIÉ, 1987, p.67

The abandoned village was not only the result of migration; the falling national birth rate also had repercussions.²¹ Fears mounted that, more than simply moving away, the peasant and consequently the village might die out altogether. Although there were those who thought a general fall in births may benefit the nation, the more pessimistic saw it as another symptom of the nation's decline.²² Charles Mourre's article from 1900, by which time the trend was well-established, forms a rationale for these sentiments. He states, 'Les naissances sont peu nombreuses chez nous, parce que nous n'avons pas d'aptitudes économiques, parce que la France est en décadence; ...'²³ Again, the blame fell on the iniquities of urban living. Apart from the economic causes cited, such as the apparent lack of prospects for young families, the moral causes were perceived as an important contributor.²⁴ As with the problem of rural migration, the 'decadent' lifestyle of modern France was increasingly seen as a corrupting influence and detrimental to family life. Mourre wrote, for example,

Aussi notre pays est-il un de ceux où s'étale la corruption la plus grande. On n'y trouve que romans obscènes, que chansons grivoises, que spectacles immoraux. On est frappé, quand on va au théâtre dans une ville allemande, de l'honnêteté des comédies qui contraste puissamment avec les pièces françaises, où l'adultère est presque toujours déifié. En Angleterre également, la vie de famille est plus développée qu'en France et la décence est beaucoup plus grande.²⁵

Those villages which were not being abandoned were increasingly yielding to this type of urban culture. The establishment of cafés and cabarets in villages was the subject of much disapproval from the more ethically-minded. Military service and the introduction of standardised State education were also blamed for leading the young astray. In acquainting them with the world beyond the village community, many believed that the Republic was

²¹ See Le Bras, H., and Bardet, J.-P., "La chute de la fécondité", in DUPÂQUIER et al, 1988, pp.351-401

²² See JONAS, 1991, pp.177-178

²³ MOURRE, 1900, p.51

²⁴ PITIÉ, 1987, p.66

²⁵ MOURRE, 1900, p.54

destroying the innocence of peasant existence and the solidity of their traditions.²⁶ In this, one might construe paintings alluding to the desertion of villages as strongly anti-modern, and hence anti-Republican, showing dismay at the current state of the nation.²⁷ The role of the village church in these paintings would therefore have held an added significance, as a symbol of tradition and moral virtue. The religious connotations which Jonas reads into the term ‘rural exodus’ would not be misplaced in the contextual political climate.²⁸

The relevance of Allou’s Salon painting of 1886, *L’Église abandonnée* (fig.195), seems particularly pointed. The church was equally important in encapsulating the life of the village and its community. As the place of christenings, marriages and burials it was the witness of the lives and deaths of almost every inhabitant throughout the village’s history.²⁹ It has been shown that the image of the church in the radiant midsummer sunshine could evoke the continuity of life. Conversely, its portrayal within paintings of the village in the stillness of night, as in Lavieille’s *Crépuscule en hiver*, may be associated with the concept of ‘eternal rest’. Theuriet’s poem “Le Village” in *La vie rustique* is based largely on the place of the church within village life. It ends

Et c’est là qu’on meurt... Pressés
Et tassés,
Là, nos fils sous l’herbe haute,
Auprès des crânes sans yeux
Des aïeux,
Viendront dormir côte à côte.³⁰

Theuriet refers consistently to the death of the working peasant as his ‘supreme rest’, perhaps a deliberate distinction from secular beliefs. Village cemeteries were very much associated with their churches and, despite being declared laic by the State, were still considered

²⁶ See PITIÉ, 1987, p.66 ; and WEBER, 1976, pp.292-302

²⁷ See PITIÉ, 1987, p.65

²⁸ JONAS, 1991, pp.178-179

²⁹ See LeBRAS, 1976, p.85

³⁰ THEURIET, 1888, p.245

religious by most.³¹ Nonetheless, whether religious or secular, with the cemetery as the final resting-place of the village inhabitants, the legacy of the community was kept alive as a memory.³² The implications of Allou's painting are especially significant in that the desertion of the church implies that the communal memory represented by both it and the cemetery will no longer be sustained. Whereas the abandoned village may have intimated the disappearance of a generation, this abandoned church appears to portend the death of the history, morals and traditions of an entire community built up by its ancestors over centuries.

Time and season: the dormant village

The connection and ambiguity between rest and death lay not only in the subject matter, however. Particularly during the 1880s the use of mood and atmosphere as a source of narrative was becoming a growing prerequisite of Salon art. The loaded significance of the village motif made it an effective armature on which to base the desired effect. The use of light to convey varying times of day and year was common practice. Comparing, for example, the village streets in Eugène Lavieille's *Country Street* and Lhermitte's *Rue de Mont-Saint-Père*, 1875, (figs.196 and 8) the compositional and structural similarities are contrasted by the midday sun of one and the delicately moonlit night of the other. The season or time of day was frequently emphasised by stating it in the titles of paintings. Among the works already cited in this chapter, it is clear that the link between the village and times of rest such as dusk, night, winter and autumn was an association often made. As times of closing and the retreating of life, it was again a question of the images' permanence and whether the village would ever be active again.

³¹ See LeBRAS, 1976, p.69

³² See LeBRAS, 1976, p.122

The connotations associated with these different settings were therefore intrinsic in conveying emotion. The extent of nature's emotional vocabulary was perceived as potentially infinite, and the landscape artist's role was to articulate it. Henry Havard's review of the 1885 Salon stated,

La nature a ses larmes, comme aussi elle a ses sourires. Son aspect sombre ou gai, ses grandes lignes joyeuses ou tristes parlent à nos cœurs, et pour que nous participions à la grandeur de ses spectacles, il suffit qu'un artiste sincère recueille pieusement ses émotions pénétrantes et sache les traduire.³³

Particularly in the context of an inanimate landscape, the tones which alluded to the lack or fading of light always tended toward the melancholic. Edmond Duranty wrote in 1877,

... afin de s'appuyer sur une harmonie facile, que la nature donne toute faite, les paysagistes ont une tendance marquée à abandonner midi pour se retourner vers le couchant, vers les crépuscules, à délaisser la nature claire et riante pour la nature noire et triste.³⁴

Gausson's *Paysage aux environs de Lagny*, for instance, shows the village touched by the waning light of dusk. Not only does he shroud the buildings in subdued tones, but the faintness of the light and the delicacy of his brushstrokes also evoke the insolidity and ephemerality of the subject. The correlation between a sombre view of a quiet village at night and the melancholy of bereavement would be a simple concept for an artist to evoke.

The taste for melancholy and poeticism was perhaps one reason for the prevalence of evening or nocturnal scenes in the Salon, appearing under headings such as *Le crépuscule* or *Effet de lune*.³⁵ An article from *L'Art* in 1878 remarked on the number of night effects in the Salon that year listing various prominent landscapists:

³³ HAVARD, 1885, pp.46-47

³⁴ DURANTY, 1877, p.52

³⁵ For discussion on "The Nocturne" see THOMSON, R., 1994, pp.109-120

Les effets de nuit sont comme toujours assez nombreux au Salon... Nous avons déjà cité les effets de lune de M. Pelouse et de M. Lépine, le crépuscule de M. Denutys ; nous avons encore les paysages de nuit de M. Dieu et de M. Lavieille sans compter tous ceux que nous laisserons de côté.³⁶

Apart from fulfilling the growing demands for atmospheric effects, the night view was perceived as a particularly difficult subject to paint and was useful for artists who wanted to flaunt their skills. The critic Henri Houssaye, criticised Charles-François Daubigny's *Lever de lune* in the Salon of 1877, and warned artists against the dangers of attempting such scenes saying, 'ces paysages sublunaires, privés de l'éclat de la couleur, sont un écueil pour les peintres.'³⁷ The artist Eugène Lavieille nonetheless appears to have made himself a niche out of this subgenre. Writing for the *Journal des Arts* in 1885, Henriet wrote, 'Lavieille fut le peintre des nuits, comme Alfred de Musset en fut le poète.'³⁸ It would be misleading to imply that he did not paint other types of landscapes; he produced several works showing sunlit scenes of the countryside. Those works he showed at the Salon, however, consistently included moonlit and evening scenes, deliberately publicising his aptitude for difficult subjects. His last sale to the State, *Une nuit d'Octobre sur le pont de la Corbionne à Moustier au Perche, Yonne*, for 2500 francs in 1880 shows that he succeeded.

Apart from the difficulty of depicting the fragility of a subject under moonlight, the sheer impracticality of painting *en plein air* at night meant that most had to be painted from memory. 'Memory painting' was a technique of growing recognition. Initially promoted by the teaching of Horace Lecoq de Boisbaudran, many artists had begun to develop the concept to facilitate the portrayal of atmosphere and more abstract moods and emotions. The fact that paintings therefore represented a reminiscence and not a direct interpretation of the object would in itself have contributed to a sense of nostalgia. Coupled with the effects of darkness, the works produced were intrinsically constituted from only the essential characteristics of

³⁶ VÉRON, 1878, p.6

³⁷ HOUSSAYE, 1877, p.846

³⁸ Henriet, F., *Journal des Arts*, 1885, transcribed in MIQUEL, 1985, p.119

the subject. Similarly to the empty streets discussed above, the invisible and the indistinct was instrumental in stirring the viewer's imagination, while what remained gained added significance. Havard described the efficacy of such imagery:

Mais dira-t-on, ne croyez-vous pas que la lumière incertaine de l'aurore ou du crépuscule prête singulièrement à ces grands effets? Assurément. Le fait n'est pas niable. Le demi-jour possède une éloquence spéciale. Il simplifie la nature, et comme tous ceux qui savent négliger, effacer les détails inutiles, il dit plus et dit mieux en moins de mots. Tout le monde sait cela; aussi les peintres ne se font-ils pas faute d'emprunter à l'indécision de ces heures solennelles, quelque peu de l'émotion qu'elles répandent sur la nature déjà ensommeillée.³⁹

A painting completed by a viewer's own personal memories would always seem more accurate and moving than one which dictated every detail.

It was therefore the artist's power of suggestion and manipulation of the viewer's emotions which had to complement his visual and technical accuracy in painting night scenes.

Lavieille was acclaimed for his 'poeticism' and subtlety of mood.⁴⁰ Rather than melancholic nostalgia, however, his paintings appear to represent more the confidence of a village at rest and not a dying victim of desertion. His *L'Église, effet de nuit* (fig.197) is similar in composition to some of his other works from the 1880s. The dominance of the church in this painting is quite striking in contrast to the receding countenance of the church in his 1873 Salon painting, *Crépuscule en hiver*, and in other artists' works such as Gausson's. With the prominence of the churches in Lavieille's landscapes, and the certainty of his compositions, the viewer is returned to the idea of the village as a sanctuary and place of security and comfort. The ambiguity of darkness does not so much evoke nostalgic melancholy as to what is not there, but creates an ethereal mystery and a sense of spirituality.

³⁹ HAVARD, 1885, p.50

⁴⁰ He was often referred to as a poet. e.g. Documentation Moreau-Nelaton, Louvre, 1880, transcribed in MIQUEL, 1985, IV, p.115

With the rich connotations entwined within the village motif – its people, traditions, and its perceived importance to the nation – the simple representation of the inactive village ‘at rest’ appears to have implied far more than it denoted. Through atmosphere or subject, the implications formed by omission opened a variety of possibilities to the viewer’s imagination. In this way, the focus of naturalism was gradually stretched toward the emotive. By relying less on the physical object and more on suggestion such imagery almost bordered on symbolism. Although in the case of these naturalist artists it was not to the extent of overt abstraction, the ambiguities which their treatment of the village introduced conveyed a wealth of meanings, from the nostalgic to the mystical and spiritual. Presented in its fundamental form, the village motif became an outlet for the expression of French society’s moral and emotional concerns.

Jean-Charles Cazin and the Intermediate Hour

A key figure in the evolution of naturalist painting at the end of the nineteenth century was the artist Jean-Charles Cazin. Now his work receives little recognition, partly because the majority of his works are in private collections or were lost or destroyed in World War I.⁴¹ For many of them the only records that remain are old reproductions and the illustrations for journal articles written prior to this time. His repute during the 1880s and 90s was, however, widespread. On his death in 1901 he received much adulation in a multitude of obituaries.

Since his birth in the Pas-de-Calais in 1841, until the late 1870s, he led a varied career. In the early 1860s he attended the studio of Lecoq de Boisbaudran, but his painting activities were often overshadowed by his need to earn money. He taught at the École Spéciale d’Architecture in Paris and was later appointed director at the École de Dessin in Tours and

⁴¹ See WEISBERG, 1980, p.282 (fn.1)

curator of the city's museum. During the Franco-Prussian War he evacuated to London where he became a skilled ceramicist. On his return he finally settled in his native region of the Pas-de-Calais and committed himself more fully to producing works on canvas. Although he had exhibited some *Études* in the Salons of 1865 and 1866 it was not until after 1875 that his presence in the exhibition gained any significant recognition.⁴² His paintings from the 1870s consisted mainly of biblical and mythological figure scenes. During the 1880s and 90s, however, it was increasingly the distinctive rural landscape of northern France, in which he set these figures, that became the focus of his art. Concentrating mostly on the small fishing village of Équihen, where he lived, and Samer, further inland where he was born, his imagery was characterised by sparse dune landscapes and humble cottages. He developed, in particular, the atmospheric and emotive qualities of his works and became renowned for his dark skies and crepuscular effects. His work represented, as Raymond Bouyer described in writing the artist's obituary, 'L'heure intermédiaire et le sentiment éternel.'⁴³

Combining the effects of his painting from memory and the atmospheric half light, his landscapes were highly expressive in conveying the modesty of these northern villages. The lack of pictorial detail which resulted, however, contrasts strongly against the floridity of critics' responses. Their analyses go far beyond the visible components of his paintings and give effective insight into the potency of the simplified village motif. Yet as the narrative of his works was based on suggestion rather than the literal, the critics' interpretation was both subjective and varied. Indeed, the uncertainty of the imagery was part of its intrigue. By examining the paintings themselves and the possibilities for interpreting them, this case study will explore the depth of meaning that Cazin's imagery could evoke. Considering first of all the role of the viewer's imagination in completing the creative process, it will then

⁴² WEISBERG, 1980, pp.281-282, gives a usefully concise biography

⁴³ BOUYER, 1901, p.396

examine the paintings' relevance in respect of contemporary contextual issues. The unassuming subtlety of Cazin's works inspired meditation even on issues of more worldly magnitude. As with all the artists discussed in this thesis, the question essentially resolves in how the village was used and interpreted in indicating the place of man in his environment.

The village through the mind's eye

Appreciation for Cazin's works was extensive and sprang from a variety of sources. His mystical combination of historical iconography in his earlier works, and the atmospheric depiction of contemporary landscape, appear to have appealed both to the tastes of Salon tradition and to those of the more radical. In citing the artist's influences critics associated him with a diverse array of celebrated artists. Those referred to by one of Cazin's main biographers after his death, the prolific critic Léonce Bénédite, included names such as Poussin, Rembrandt, Hobbema, Millet and Puvis de Chavannes.⁴⁴ In contrast, however, his paintings were perceived by others as impressionistic and even symbolist. In 1894, for example, the young symbolist writer Camille Mauclair ranked Cazin alongside Monet, calling them 'paysagistes qui synthétisent'.⁴⁵ Cazin's concentration on the effects of light was certainly a striking feature of his work, yet his allusions to an emotive narrative were arguably far more deliberate than in Monet's. In this respect a comparison to the work of Paul Gauguin's group of artists, the self-named 'Synthétistes', may have been more appropriate. Although stylistically Cazin's images were far more naturalistic, strong parallels can be drawn with Gauguin's ideas regarding painting emotion: 'un grand sentiment peut être traduit immédiatement, rêvez dessus et cherchez-en la forme la plus simple.'⁴⁶

⁴⁴ See BÉNÉDITE, 1897, pp.165, 166; and 1902, pp.92, 93, 95, 102

⁴⁵ MAUCLAIR, 1894, p.275

⁴⁶ Gauguin, letter to Schuffenecker, 14 January 1885, transcribed in MERLHÈS, 1984, letter 65, at p.89

Furthermore, in Pierre Miquel's more recent analysis of the 'école de la nature', written in 1975, Cazin is categorised as a 'Neo-Realist'. He is grouped with artists such as Jules Breton, Henri Fantin-Latour, Léon Lhermitte and James McNeill Whistler, who all superpose, it states, 'des tendances romantiques, réalistes et harmonistes'.⁴⁷ More significantly, however, they were also all followers of Lecoq de Boisbaudran and his memory painting techniques. Through his teaching he encouraged artists to work from 'stored observations' from nature, exploiting the link between memory and imagination.⁴⁸ As Henri Focillon described, Lecoq de Boisbaudran's methods were 'non seulement une excitation de la mémoire, mais un entraînement de l'imagination.'⁴⁹

Whereas in many paintings from memory the artist's own nostalgia might be expected to have taken a dominant role, the isolation of Cazin's works from personal affectation seems marked. Even though he was painting his native region, and the place where he lived, the perspective of his paintings appears distinctly removed. A comparison can be made with another of Lecoq de Boisbaudran's students, Lhermitte, whose paintings show obvious affection and involvement in painting his own village community. Even in his rather sketchy *La rue Haute de Mont-Saint-Père*, 1872 (fig.198) for example, the detail in the shaping of the church tower and the houses is conscientious and very specific. In his genre scenes too, the peasant inhabitants are recognisable from one painting to another. Although Cazin's familiarity with his home environment is evident in his distinctive characterisation of the northern landscape, more specific or sentimental references seem lacking. *La villa Cazin à Équihehen* (fig.199), for example, apparently the artist's house, is composed from a detached viewpoint partly obstructed by the grassy hillock in the foreground. It shows hardly any recognition of distinguishing features and the emphasis of the selective moonlight creates a more unified and generalised atmospheric effect. Differentiating between the different

⁴⁷ MIQUEL, 1975, I, p.112

⁴⁸ See ALDUR, 1909, p.307

⁴⁹ FOCILLON, 1928, p.162

villages portrayed is also difficult; their significance as individual places is lost. Instead, they appear distinct as a generic regional type, identified in Cazin's landscapes by the squat pan-tiled cottages amid the bleak coastal terrain. Rather than using his memory to develop the visual detail of his paintings as Lhermitte did, Cazin turned to the indistinct. Enhanced by the non-specific qualities of evening and moonlight, the effect was to stimulate the subjective memory of each viewer to refine the image. The critic Léopold Mabileau described Cazin's paintings at the Salon of 1890, '... comme cela a lieu dans le regard vrai, dans le regard d'imagination surtout, où tout ce qui n'atteint pas la pleine intensité disparaît dans le brouillard du souvenir.'⁵⁰

The evocative nature of Cazin's images was such that they were not simply perceived as a visual experience but as appealing to all the other senses as well. Critics often articulated the suggestive power of Cazin's imagery in terms of sound and sometimes smell – which in themselves were elements that could be highly charged with memories and nostalgia.⁵¹ Bénédite explained in his monograph of 1897, '... c'est un paysagiste essentiellement évocateur qui éveille la sensation encore plus que l'illusion.'⁵² Some referred to musical effects and harmonies, for example in Arthur Baignères's review of the first exhibition of the Société Internationale de Peintres et Sculpteurs for the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* in 1883. He wrote,

Le sentiment de la nature et de la réalité s'effacent peu à peu ; on se croit au pays des rêves musicaux, comme après avoir écouté une romance sans paroles de Mendelssohn. Pourquoi ne publierait-on pas un album de M. Cazin avec ce titre : Paysage sans pays ?⁵³

⁵⁰ MABILLEAU, 1890, p.11

⁵¹ See CORBIN, 1986, pp.200-204

⁵² BÉNÉDITE, 1897, pp.173-174 ; and see also Saint-Victor, P. de, *La Presse*, 1861, cited in MIQUEL, 1975, p.112 re. the musical effect of the works by Lecoq de Boisbaudran's followers.

⁵³ Baignères, 1883, pp.190-191

Yet it was the ‘silence’ of the paintings which was most often remarked, and the heightened sensations that one acquires in the stillness of evening and night. Bénédite stated,

Personne n'excelle à rendre comme lui les petits chemins de villages endormis qui sentent bon les feuilles mouillées et les senteurs d'étables, et ces étroites maisons aux fenêtres closes, serrées l'une contre l'autre, toutes transies sous la froide clarté de la lune qui donne aux vitres des éclats fantastiques.⁵⁴

Rather than stagnant ‘photographs’ Cazin’s paintings seem to have been perceived as living moments of stillness, which the imagination allowed to be animated far more subtly than any literal representation.

The perception of human activity hidden within the village buildings was also a recurring component of contemporary reviews. François Thiébault-Sisson wrote in his obituary for *Les Arts*,

Tout y suggère la présence de l'homme. Le repas pris en famille, après les fatigues du jour, nous est dit par la chaumière isolée dont la fenêtre rougeoit du feu de l'âtre; la veillée solitaire, par la lampe dont la flamme allume des étincelles sur la vitre.⁵⁵

Le village d'Artois (fig.200) is one example where, even in a black and white illustration, the brightness of the window in the background is clearly emphatic. It is largely due to the strength of the connotations attached to the village motif that such a small detail might convey so much. Cazin’s use of figures was usually sparing, but the significance of the human community was still pivotal to his village iconography. Paul Desjardins wrote, ‘Même quand l’homme est absent de ses tableaux, on respire toujours de son voisinage.’⁵⁶ By the aspect of the buildings, the sandy streets and the bleakness of the surrounding landscape, viewers were able to establish the inhabitants’ presence and also their character and lifestyle. Georges Petit’s catalogue for his posthumous exhibition of Cazin’s paintings

⁵⁴ BÉNÉDITE, 1902, p.89

⁵⁵ THIÉBAULT-SISSON, 1902, p.32

⁵⁶ DESJARDINS, 1901, p.190

referred to, for instance, ‘... un regard fauve derrière les vitres...’, and Desjardins to, ‘... un certain genre de vie chétif, mais tranquille, d’une certaine disposition résignée.’⁵⁷ Quite distinct from the prepossessing peasants featured in so many paintings of villages, there is an element in Cazin’s pictures that makes recourse to the slightly derogatory and pitying perception of rural life – the primitive peasant scratching out his existence from the wild.

The distinction from Parisian society and the urban environment was clear. Instead of the reassuring alternative to city life offered by some rural paintings, however, Cazin’s landscapes were consistently tainted by uncertainty. While the Parisian viewer may have considered himself far removed from such a race and environment, there remains an ambiguity regarding his role in relation to the imagery. The positioning of the viewpoint was intrinsic in creating a sense of emotion and a potential desire to participate in the community. Although the allusion to a human presence hidden from view was frequent, it was also effective in stressing the desolation and lack of activity outside. Rather than being invited into the familiarity of the *veillée* as in Lepère’s painting, in *Le village d’Artois* the viewer seems alienated from the source of the faceless light in the cottage window. Particularly when set amid nightfall, stormy skies and a sparse landscape, the vulnerable aspect of the viewer’s position is again heightened. Although one might expect the presence of a house to indicate the prospect of shelter, in Cazin’s paintings the featureless walls and closed doors emphasise the viewer’s exclusion from such comforts. In *Village Street with a Rainbow*, 1880s (fig.201), for instance, the eye is led down a deserted street with high walls and gable-ends on either side with only the suggestion of the houses and gardens beyond. Even where there are figures, as in *Village de Mun (Seine et Marne)* (fig.202),⁵⁸ the spectator’s role frequently seems to be that of an outsider passing through. Both buildings and figures seem

⁵⁷ PETIT, 1906, pp.10-11; and DESJARDINS, 1901, p.190

⁵⁸ Also known as *The Gossips*, and *Normandy Village Street at Dusk*. *Village de Mun* appears to be the original title cited in BÉNÉDITE, 1902, p.78.

introspective and incognisant of any other presence, while the road draws the eye straight past them and out of the village.

In spite of the definite differentiation between viewer and peasant, the highly evocative nature of the imagery was essential in reinforcing a sense of emotional involvement. By placing the viewer in a position of isolation and vulnerability Cazin was able to create a sense of lacking, for example, the need to access the peasant lifestyle in order to find shelter. Indeed, it was that which was not expressly included which was in many ways the most significant aspect of his paintings. Particularly in respect of the fading light and the effects of his painting by memory, the viewer would be constantly provoked into considering what should be there. The fact that the resulting discoveries of the imagination would never be satisfied materially in the painting would provide a poignant tension between the idealism of reminiscence and the deficiencies of what was actually there. Set in the social historical context, there were in this respect many resounding parallels with the perceptions of rural life and the concerns which arose from it.

Time and transition

Where the effect of a painting was based on viewers' personal responses and associations, the influence of contemporary social sensitivities and attitudes was inevitable. Cazin's paintings of the village 'at rest' were not different from those by other artists in responding to and exciting the more topical hopes and fears of the audience. His distinctively subtle treatment of the iconography, however, meant that the number of levels at which his works could be interpreted was arguably more diverse and sometimes even paradoxical. The concise simplicity of his images was suggestive and emotive, but rarely confirmed any clear narrative. With regard to the social, political and religious themes discussed in this thesis, his

works can be interpreted from a number of different perspectives. By examining Cazin's choice and treatment of his subject matter, this section will attempt to identify some of the issues and ambiguities implicated in his village imagery.

Cazin himself had a mixed background. His father a doctor, he was born into a relatively wealthy family and had a suitably bourgeois education and upbringing. While native to the northern countryside, he had also lived among the city art worlds of Paris and London. His political and religious values appear to have been broad based, an aspect which lends to the ambiguity of his paintings. The prominent republican politician Léon Gambetta was an acquaintance of the artist and stayed with him at Équihaen.⁵⁹ Cazin also painted at least one overtly republican canvas, *Souvenir de fête à Paris*, which was exhibited at the 1881 Salon and purchased by the municipal council of Paris for the city's collections. He also painted *L'ours et l'amateur de jardin* and *La maison de Socrate* for the Sorbonne in 1892, although any trace of these has now been lost. He was considered for the decoration of the Panthéon in the 1870s but failed to take up the proposal. There was an equally strong religious current in the artist's work, however. His earlier Salon paintings, for instance, depicted scenes from the Old Testament such as *Tobie et l'ange*, 1880 (fig.203), set in the northern French countryside. Some of his later genre scenes, although not given religious titles, were clearly references to Christian iconography. *La journée faite* (fig.204), for example, recalls hieratic depictions of the Holy Family, and is strongly reminiscent of the peasant piety depicted in many of Millet's paintings.⁶⁰ To interpret spiritual and religious connotations in his unpeopled landscapes, therefore, would be by no means implausible. The subtle meditative nature of his paintings makes a number of inferences possible.

⁵⁹ DOITEAU, 1960, p.459

⁶⁰ See discussion on Cazin's painting of religious subjects in DRISKEL, 1992, p.226

The sense of peace, stillness and tranquillity is perhaps the simplest and most immediate facet of Cazin's village images. The painting *Entrée d'Arbonne*, (fig.205) seems almost soporific with its soft light effects and central composition drawing the eye, the birds and even the moon into the village as a conclusion to its narrative. A sales catalogue from 1909 describes the painting, saying, 'la lune disparaît derrière les maisons.'⁶¹ There was certainly a soothing aspect to what Petit identified as, 'les heures douces de repos et de recueillement qu'il a inscrites dans son oeuvre!'⁶² The idea of *la rentrée* and the return from the day's labour is recurrent in paintings like *Village de Mun (Seine et Marne)*. Similarly to other paintings of villages alluding to withdrawal and inactivity, however, the relief suggested by this prospect of respite was tempered by an element of poignancy. As Focillon described, 'le sens de l'émotion humaine dans le calme des formes.'⁶³ In paintings such as *Henry Poor's Cottage: Full moon* (fig.206) the artist developed the theme further by shifting the focus to those waiting for the return of their loved-ones. While this English title was probably invented by an American dealer, in French the title of *l'Attente* might be more appropriate as it appears alongside a number of Cazin's paintings of similar subject. Prolonged by the stillness of the scene, the image seems to allude to an anxiety that the absence may be indefinite.

Especially in Équihen, which was a fishing village, these concerns were probably constant among the inhabitants and could easily be applied to the imagery of *L'Orage* (fig.207), painted in 1876 and exhibited later at the Exposition Universelle of 1900. The houses clustered safely into the bay, and the boats moored on the shore, all seem to look out in anticipation at the solitary boat on the horizon while the storm clouds gather overhead. The popularity of paintings of *naufrages* and images of widows looking wistfully out to sea would certainly have helped to reinforce these allusions. The meditative nature of Cazin's

⁶¹ Entry no.14 of the sales catalogue for Hotel-Drouot, Paris, May 1909

⁶² PETIT, 1906, p.10

⁶³ FOCILLON, 1928, p.248

paintings also encouraged a broader and less specific interpretation, however. The anxieties regarding absence, for example, could equally be understood in terms of the decline and fragility of rural communities as a result of migration and modernity. Interpreted from a religious perspective in particular, Cazin's paintings might be seen as sympathetic to the protective sentiments of catholic conservatism. In a recent study, for instance, Gabriel Weisberg has argued that the threats and changes of the industrial age were reflected in the 'age-old parables of agonising expulsions from one's home...'⁶⁴ While probably referring to works such as *Tobie et l'ange*, however, such notions may be just as relevant to his landscapes. As will be seen, the motif of the 'flight into Egypt' is one which emerges in a number of his paintings. Similarly, the vigilance and longing conveyed in paintings such as *Henry Poor's Cottage* can also be understood in respect of waiting for the return of the prodigal. *L'enfant prodigue* was a familiar theme in paintings of this period. James Tissot's series of four works entitled *The Prodigal Son in Modern Life*, completed in 1881, is one example. It was a fitting allegory for the effects of rural depopulation and industrialisation.

The ambiguity of these works does not preclude a less nostalgic interpretation, however. The peasant lifestyle conveyed in Cazin's paintings, for instance, is a distinct contrast to the 'pastoral' ideals evident in works by other artists. The figures are small in scale, anonymous and beleaguered-looking. Instead of appearing bright and carefree in traditional costumes, their dull working clothes seem to reflect poverty and hard toil. The men in particular appear involved in heavy labour, for example the one in *Village de Mun* with the pick over his shoulder and the wheelbarrow beside him, indicative of quarry work. *La journée faite* is perhaps a more explicit reference, again similar to the struggling peasants in Millet's paintings. Even where no figures appear there are often piles of stones situated next to the roadside, as in *The Rainbow*, *Achères la Forêt* (fig.208) and *Village Street with a Rainbow*. These subtle allusions to the men's work could have also sparked associations with Gustave

⁶⁴ WEISBERG, 1999, p.37

Courbet's 'very pitiable figures' in his famous realist painting of 1850, *The Stonebreakers* (fig.209).⁶⁵ There was clearly a distinction between Cazin's works and the popular scenes of harmonious communities gathering in a plentiful harvest. Even in comparison to paintings of deserted villages by other artists, there is little suggestion of the stereotypical village ideal, past or present.

Equally, the transience implied by the passing storms and scenes in twilight make an emphatic allusion to the prospect of change. Although it too may have been considered a pertinent threat to rustic tradition, there is equally a facet of these works which might be considered as showing pity for those who have been left behind by progress. *The Route Nationale at Samer* (fig.210) is one example. The viewer's concentration lands first of all on the rather dishevelled dwelling on the right and the meagre-looking life that revolves around it. Due to the composition, however, the eye is drawn along the road leading away from this type of existence, by implication following the cart over the horizon. Whereas many artists used roads as visual devices to draw the eye into the village, a number of Cazin's works assume viewpoints looking away from the houses with the road emphasising passing and departure. The main artery between Paris and Calais, this road would have represented a significant right of access to urban civilisation. But while the viewer is shown the prospect of change and migration, the peasant inhabitant seems oblivious and entrenched in a life of subsistence.

Rather than an idealised sense of civilised social structure Cazin's villages often appear small and disparate, the environment infertile, and the inhabitants impoverished. Instead of overcoming nature and living in harmony with it, the peasants appear subjugated and victim to their natural environment. He depicts fragile communities, clinging to their existence; and in works such as *Maison en ruine au bord de la mer* (fig.211) their vulnerability is

⁶⁵ Courbet, letter to Champfleury, February-March 1850, translated in CHU, 1992, p.92

confirmed. Whether such images were a deliberate comment on the decline and desperation of rural society is never expressly confirmed or denied. The subtlety of his iconography would certainly allow such associations to be made; and the poeticism he conveyed in depicting the harshness of the environment was clearly successful in creating an emotional effect. Nonetheless, interpretation of Cazin's paintings was not limited to ideas regarding the contemporary plight of villages and rural life, or even the French nation as a whole.

The village and mankind

For many, Cazin's paintings appear to have evoked a notion of something far more primal than the simple contemporary context. In its broadest sense, interpretation of his imagery also encompassed the place of man within the natural world. Instead of being distinct from nature and a guiding force over it, the connection of the people to the environment was perceived as more primitive in their being a product of their surroundings. Bénédite wrote, for example, that the people featured or suggested in Cazin's paintings were 'comme l'émanation concrète de l'âme des lieux.'⁶⁶ The village buildings appear as an enduring marker of the close link between the physical surroundings and its inhabitants. With the houses clearly constructed from the local resources, a number of paintings show building materials as if to accentuate the transition from nature. *Rue de village* (fig.212) is an example. In *Le village* (fig.213), where a figure is inserted, he appears almost as an accessory. The painting shows the felled tree trunks lying ready to be cut into the planks leaning against the wall; and in the houses behind, the community which will use them. The man picking up his saw is a minor addition to the narrative. It is as if the village has grown organically from the land and hence dictates the implicit character of its population as well.

⁶⁶ BÉNÉDITE, 1902, p.76

As a living object, however, the village and the community's existence are also conveyed as finite. The ephemeral and transient nature of Cazin's imagery is emphatic. The focus on light and atmospheric effects in particular impels the subject matter toward the ethereal and intangible. His paintings of rainbows, such as *Village Street with a Rainbow* and *The Rainbow, Achères la Forêt*, mark the capture of the fleeting moment. The instant depicted shows the light breaking through the storm-clouds to reveal this symbol of elusiveness. Similarly, Bénédite referred to Cazin's evening scenes as showing 'cette heure indécise, ce moment hésitant entre les dernières lueurs du jour qui s'en va et les premières ombres de la nuit qui monte...'⁶⁷ The imminent disappearance of the landscape into darkness also lends to the idea of mortality. Weisberg has referred to the reviews of the Republican journalist and arts administrator Roger Marx, saying that he 'drew parallels between the light waning at the end of the day and the waning of the powers of the elderly.'⁶⁸

Certainly, the correlation between the village at rest and ideas of eternal rest and the death of the community should not be ignored in considering Cazin's works. The character of the physical landscape contributes to such interpretations. Neither the hostility of the apparently barren terrain, nor the meagre and disparate houses seem conducive to the development and prosperity of human life or the community. In paintings such as *La sablière* (fig.214), for example, the presence of the houses appears only as permanent as the shifting sands upon which they are built. In *L'Orage* too, the houses seem to emerge tentatively from the dunes around the bay. With the village's sustenance coming from the sea, the houses and boats converge around the frontier between land and water as if to demonstrate the connection. Here, however, the lack of actual figures seems more pronounced amid the ominous stormy atmosphere. While dependent on the environment for their livelihood, they are also at the mercy of its changing moods. Again the viewer is reminded of the mortality and fragility of

⁶⁷ BÉNÉDITE, 1902, p.90

⁶⁸ Marx, R., "Le Salon de 1897, II : La Peinture au Salon du Champ-de-Mars", *Le Rapide*, 24 April 1896, p.2 cited in WEISBERG, 1999, p.36

the community, and the idea of the dominance of nature becomes focal. Although the concept of man struggling against the elements might be perceived as rather romanticist, the tonal and compositional effects used in portraying the storm are not dramatic. In his 1890 Salon review, Mabilleanu commented on the lack of excess and affectation in Cazin's paintings saying, 'Point de solennité romantique, d'emphase grandiloquente, point d'effets de théâtre ou de décor: une poésie juste et vraie émanant des choses ingénument senties...'⁶⁹ The subtlety of the works did not detract from the effect. Thiébault-Sisson still referred to the 'assauts de l'élément contre l'homme' in describing Cazin's paintings; 'elles fixent des impressions plutôt tristes, effets de crépuscule, effet de nuit, temps de brume, temps de bise, temps d'orage.'⁷⁰ Rather than a stirring vision of impending doom the imagery seems to convey a more prolonged sense of awe and melancholy.

Instead of romanticism, the passive nature of Cazin's somewhat fatalistic imagery might be seen instead as more consistent with evolutionary theory. Alfred de Lostalot reviewed the artist's paintings in the first Exposition Internationale de Peinture, at the Galerie George Petit in 1885, saying 'Il nous transporte dans je ne sais quel planète où la végétation semble cuite au feu de quelque volcan souterrain. Cette peinture des temps préhistoriques devient monotone à la longue...'⁷¹ The primitive nature of the peasant lifestyle, as well as wild landscape could certainly be interpreted as portraying an undeveloped form of existence, distinct from the civilised world of the viewer. Particularly since the revelations of Charles Darwin's treatises, the scientific world and society in general had become far more aware of the extent of human existence. *The Descent of Man*, which suggested the evolution of man from 'lower forms' had seen its first edition quite recently in 1871. A translated version was published the following year in French with later editions produced soon after. In addition, much progress had been made in the fields of geology, biology and astronomy. The brevity

⁶⁹ MABILLEAU, 1890, p.11

⁷⁰ THIÉBAULT-SISSON, 1902, pp.32-33

⁷¹ De LOSTALOT, 1885, p.532

of humanity was gradually being put into perspective in relation to the Earth's natural history and the infinity of the universe.

The link between Cazin's perception of 'nature' and this new scientific perspective was evidently clear to some critics. Bénédite, for example wrote,

La philosophie qui a montré le néant de l'homme, la science qui a fait pressentir l'infini des mondes, nous ont permis, depuis, de comprendre les rapports de l'homme avec sa planète et ceux de sa planète avec le reste de l'univers. ... Ce sentiment que l'homme n'est plus qu'un simple accident...; cette sensation de l'humilité terrestre sous la gloire éternelle des cieux, c'est semble-t-il, ce qu'éveille au fond de nous l'âme nouvelle du paysage moderne et ce que nous éprouvons peut-être plus que chez tout autre devant l'oeuvre éminemment subjective de Cazin.⁷²

The specific inclusion of stars in several paintings, as in *Henry Poor's Cottage*, also contributes to such concepts. They function as an unobtrusive reminder of the world's diminutive status within the perpetual universe. Although the controversy over such scientific theories was gradually receding, acceptance of them still marked a more progressive train of thought. While not necessarily indicating allegiance to republican ideals they did signify modernist tendencies and questioned many tenets of the Catholic faith.⁷³

Yet it is clear that Cazin's paintings did not deny a sense of spirituality or religion. If Cazin's paintings are interpreted as demonstrating the insignificance of man in respect of the eternity of time and space, they could equally represent the humility of man in the face of God.

Fishing communities, for example, were known to be particularly God-fearing. A local priest named L'Abbé Joncquel, for example, stressed Équihe's dependence on God in appeasing the forces of the sea. He stated in his Benediction of the Sea at Équihe in 1884; '... l'océan est un vaste cimetière qui vous fait faire les plus sérieuses réflexions et excite dans vos âmes

⁷² BÉNÉDITE, 1902, p.97

⁷³ See CLARK, 1984, pp.91-95

les plus ferventes de prières.’⁷⁴ Cazin’s coastal landscapes, as in *L’Orage*, could easily have alluded to the significance of divine nature in the life of the village.

The significance of the French village setting was integral to the implied religious narrative in a number of Cazin’s works. In the composition of *Le départ* (fig.215) especially, it is the strangely anachronistic context which dominates over the expressly symbolic grouping of the Holy Family. The imagery is not dissimilar to that of the later *Sunday Evening in a Miner’s Village*, 1892 (fig.216). With the sense of exclusion evoked by the glowing windows, the image could plausibly be read as portraying the ‘flight into Egypt’. Especially where the figures are modest and anonymous, the symbolic implications existed as much in the significance of the whole landscape. Furthermore, if the inhabitants are considered as a product of the location then the natural progression from this point would imply an inherent religiosity contained in the landscape itself, whether the figures are revealed or not. For Desjardins, the hardships represented by Cazin’s bleak landscapes were admirable proof of the region’s inherent piety. He was resolutely right-wing and in the 1890s formed l’Union pour l’Action Morale. In keeping with his personal values, he wrote that Cazin’s landscapes were ‘l’inverse de tout ce qui réjouissait l’imagination païenne.’⁷⁵ Indeed, on the map of religious vitality from 1877, the Pas-de-Calais is classed as one of most fervent regions (map 6). It seems that for many the village motif encapsulated the religiosity of the location. It was at once the setting for biblical allegory as well as characterising both the landscape and the villagers themselves. Through the meditative ambiguity, and implicitly symbolic nature of Cazin’s paintings, the village might even be considered as a form of French Bethlehem.

The relevance of Cazin’s village paintings appears to have been wide-ranging, even contradictory, without compromising the impact of his imagery. Paradoxically, it was the

⁷⁴ JONQUEL, 1884, p.4

⁷⁵ DESJARDINS, 1901, p.188

reduction and simplification of the motif to its barest components which embellished their suggestive effect. The details which were included were heightened in their symbolic significance. Yet it was the absent details which appear to have been most evocative for the viewer, giving flexibility to the imagination as well as emotional involvement. By painting the village 'at rest' the dimmed light created intrigue and stillness gave thought to activity. In allowing the audience to meditate on the effects of his imagery and find its implications within their own memory, the appeal of Cazin's landscape paintings was indiscriminate. Just as it is difficult to situate the artist's own perspective, his interpretation of the village appears to have accommodated an entire spectrum of ideals. The religious as much as the atheistic, the traditionalist as much as the progressive; all found relevance within the familiarity of the village motif.

Conclusion

As a contrast to the working village, the motif of the village 'at rest' was representative more of the nation's concerns than its hopes and ideals. In effect, these two different ways of perceiving the village complement each other in clarifying the different aspects of French social values regarding rural life. Whereas the paintings of villages in the evening often connoted reassuring ideas of tranquillity, repose, and perhaps sanctuary, they also implied the absence of activity and productivity. Given the extent to which these elements were idealised among much of the rural iconography from this period, the apparent withdrawal of the living community would have been an emotive subject. The contextual sensitivity to issues regarding rural depopulation and modernisation would have been a particular factor in reinforcing the resonance of such imagery. Paintings of deserted streets or neglected buildings were indicative not only of the disappearance of the village and its inhabitants but also all the traditions, memories and moral values, with which they were associated.

It was through the projection of mood and atmosphere, however, that artists gave full effect to the emotional content of their paintings. While the omission of figures and the inclusion of abandoned houses and farms would have held their own implications, the manipulation of time and season was also essential in creating the appropriate impression. Those paintings alluding to the closing of evening or the dying-off of winter, for example, were perceived as especially poetic and melancholy. Yet it was essentially the contemplative subtlety that the atmospheric effect lent to the paintings' content, which enhanced the evocative impact of such works. By capturing the nuances of the changing light and nature, the focus of the landscape could be shifted from the express components of its subject matter to the subjective response of the viewer. In depicting the diffuse light of evening or moonlight, detail gave way to suggestion, stimulating the imagination of the audience and compelling them to forge their own associations.

Cazin's many paintings of the villages of northern France demonstrate the emotive versatility of the atmospheric motif. Reducing the landscape to its most essential components under the meditative veil of twilight or the shadow of a passing storm, the details remaining were heightened in significance. But it was the details which were not expressly defined that allowed the viewer's own memory and emotions to complete the creative process and add narrative and meaning. Hence, a grouping of drab and desolate cottages was able to become the cause of profound reflection. What made the evocative nature of Cazin's images so successful, however, was the fact that the ideals and associations relating to the village, its inhabitants, and its role in French society, were already so highly developed. More than simply a motif, the village had now become a symbol of the values, beliefs and identity of the French nation itself.

Chapter Six

The Village and the Nation

The popularity and prevalence of the village landscape during the period 1870-1890 was shaped by a large number of factors. During these years the motif evolved through significant social and political developments, as well as the changing exigencies of the art world. The choices that each artist made in painting the motif reflected a certain stance in respect to all of these, whether as an express decision or as a subconscious reflection of his own attitudes. By situating the motif within its context it has been possible to appreciate the full range of meanings and ramifications of this banal but vital subject. Equally, the ways in which the motif was portrayed and interpreted have betrayed the attitudes and sensibilities of those who painted and consumed them. The motif was in essence a product of the context in which it functioned, and the social requirements that it fulfilled.

The tastes and demands of the art market were, for example, integral to the development of the motif. The authority wielded by the State and the Académie des Beaux-Arts, through commissions, honours, and selection for the Salon, had a major impact on the type of paintings produced. In condoning the academic 'historical' landscapes during the 1870s, for example, the official success of conservative artists such as Harpignies was assured. The effects of these policies were perhaps most significant, however, in the opposition they provoked from the Impressionists. Similarly, as the emphasis of State policy shifted in the 1880s with the advent of the Opportunist Republic, art also evolved. Their liberal and anti-conservative approach encouraged the naturalist proclivity for contemporary scenes of everyday French life. Although authority over the Salon was quickly relinquished at the beginning of the decade, the State's role as patron was still a major incentive to artists. The

hanging of a painting in a public building or museum was certainly effective publicity for those attempting to establish a good reputation. In this, a link between the subjects that some artists portrayed and the propagandist ideas of the Republic was unavoidable. The universally recognisable image of the village, depicting a unified and democratic society of workers, was a particularly effective demonstration of Republican values. Furthermore, paintings of such communities from different areas of France, all with the same harmonious traits, were an apt analogy for the national unity the State was trying to promote. As well as reflecting the inherent political attitudes of the period, therefore, some works played an active part in expressing specific political ideals.

The growing strength of the private market also contributed to the weakening of academic authority and the gradual dilution of the Salon's status at the centre of the Paris art world. Artists found more scope for experimentation and diversity within the private sphere. As the focus of the market altered, however, attempts at commercialism were unrestrained. Village landscapes were clearly perceived as a highly marketable subject, suitable for the parlours and dining rooms of the growing bourgeoisie and *nouveaux-riches*. The repetitive use of the motif by certain artists certainly exposes it as a rustic crowd-pleaser, for example in Claude Monet's paintings of Vétheuil. Others, such as Henri Harpignies and Jean-Charles Cazin, could also be accused of 'churning out' such works.

The reasons behind the village's marketability, as well as its attraction to artists, were several. The place of the motif in relation to the evolving status of the wider landscape genre was one important contributing factor. Since the immortalisation of the École de 1830, paintings of rural life and landscapes had become ubiquitous. Particularly during the 1870s, these dying artists were upheld as the new masters of French painting and became the metre stick against which to measure others. The realist scenes of peasant imagery by those such as Jean-François Millet, which had once shocked the art world, were now an axiomatic feature

of French painting. Sustained by the new generation of naturalists, these rustic scenes were now perceived as representing the ‘reality’ of contemporary France. Particularly with the increasing emphasis on painting *en plein air*, the immediacy and ‘truth’ of such images became a pivotal characteristic. In landscapes, such effects were enhanced by the identification of specific locations – contributing not only to the visual accuracy of the works, but also their poetic resonance in depicting part of the French nation. If inhabited, the implication of lifestyle and activity would have added further to the image’s relevance. The practicalities of working *en plein air* would also have been conducive to the development of the village as a landscape motif. The countryside was a far more pleasant and peaceful environment in which to paint, and picturesque sites usually proved far more plentiful and patient than their peasant inhabitants. Where artists did paint genre scenes, the authenticity of the setting was often as important as the figures themselves. Amid the consequent blurring of the genres, the combining of the *paysan* and *paysage* culminated in the village landscape.

The demand for such landscapes was also influenced by the railways and the growing ability of the general public to visit the regions. Although each individual community was in itself often obscure and inconsequential, the urban bourgeoisie was becoming far more familiar with the provincial countryside and its rustic villages as a generality. Much of the attraction resided in the prospect of escape from the complexities and commotion of the cities.

Through their own experience of rural existence as visitors, the bourgeoisie were able to identify more and more with the landscapes and lifestyles depicted in the artistic imagery. Whereas the cultural independence and exoticism of the provinces had once been a subject for derision and even fear, they were now both accessible and amenable to the diversity and unity of the nation. Particularly as the urban environment became less recognisable as a result of modernisation and industrialisation, the bourgeoisie could feel an affinity with the unchanging rural villages as the ‘true’ France. Socially distant from the realities of peasant

society, however, and reluctant to compromise on their own comforts, the tendency to idealise was widespread.

Artists' eagerness to fulfil the audience's and critics' expectations of 'truth' in painting these French villages is ironically evident in the common stereotypes and presumptions that emerged. In attempting to comply with the requirements of picturesque convention, such works were less a depiction of reality than a reflection of urban ideals and nostalgia. In order to stimulate the viewers' perceptions most effectively, it was necessarily the most familiar iconography, rather than the most realistic, that would be the most evocative. With the emergence of symbolist tendencies in the work of some artists during the 1880s, it was the emotive connotations suggested by the village motif that began to take precedence. The simplified motifs of Cazin and Paul Gauguin, for example, placed the emphasis on the psychological associations that the image evoked, rather than the content of the painting itself. Instead of depicting all the contemporary idiosyncrasies of the actual place, the artists effectively encouraged the formation of stereotypes by reducing the motif and relying on the recollection and imagination of the urban viewers. Whereas Cazin relied on the suggestive ambiguity of atmospheric effects, Gauguin departed from reality and intensified the significance of the motif by reducing it to its essential components. In both cases, however, the import of their paintings was founded on the widespread familiarity of the village motif and the depth of meaning and connotations it conveyed.

More than simply a group of buildings, the village implied a community of people, a certain lifestyle, and a specific social structure between man, nature and God. Particularly amid the social uncertainty of industrialisation, urban sprawl and post-war politics the apparent simplicity of this rural life seemed a welcome alternative to many in urban society. The notion of reciprocity between the community's devotion and the natural bounty they received in return represented a reassuring form of natural order and moral code. The role of

the village church was key in this respect, asserting the presence of God in nature and promoting the piety of its inhabitants. The secular significance of the setting, however, and the land as *la terre Française*, was equally important. The village acted as a social model to aspire to, and an alternative way of life in which to gain sanctuary. But whether focused on religion or *la patrie*, the moral messages were the same: unity and dedication to labour yielded prosperity and fecundity in life.

Indeed, the universality of the village motif was a major element of its success. As a contrast to or an analogy of their own context, most could identify with the notion of the small functioning social unit. The values it could evoke were often strong but also wide-ranging: positive and negative, sometimes controversial and even paradoxical. In the context of secularisation, for example, the conservatism of Catholic religiosity was expressed through the prominence of the church's role in the community and the devoutness of the peasants. Yet the village was equally important as a symbol of the aspirations of the secular Republic. Similarly, the individuality, independence and traditions of each community were tempered by the centralist connotations of its role as part of the greater French nation. Furthermore, as well as representing ideals, the village motif could also express national concerns. Where the idealised image was mitigated, for instance through the lack of activity, unity and community, it became a source for concern. Where the viewer's memory was called on to consider what was missing, it provoked nostalgia and melancholy. Similarly, just as the village was made up of the collective life-cycles of its own inhabitants, it could also be perceived as an ephemeral living entity. By situating it in a different time of day or season, suggestions could also be made to its position within its own life-span. While the midday optimism of flourishing harvests placed the community in the prime of life, the nostalgic melancholy of many evening and winter scenes was far more fatalistic. The prevailing sense of rural decline, due to migration, depopulation and agricultural recession, lent to the

contextual relevance of these effects. In view of the nation's growing affinity with the rural community, such allusions could be extremely evocative.

While the versatility of the village motif was an effective reflection of the different attitudes and emotions of French artists and their audiences towards their contemporary context, the motif itself was not a modern entity. Apart from rare exceptions, such as Sisley's paintings of Saint-Mammès, the village motif did not represent observed reality, but was a timeless ideal to be aspired to or nostalgically cherished. As the most basic form of society, it was perceived as the fundamental source and refuge of civilisation. Long-established and unchanging, it represented the foundation from which the rest of the nation had developed. The village was therefore seen as old-fashioned and a remnant of *autrefois* – the distinct converse of the modern city. In a romanticised sense it represented the old traditions and values on which the nation was built. Quite contrary to the Impressionists' paintings of the contemporary city and its *banlieues*, a significant element of the village motif represented a rejection of present times and a craving for the anti-modern. After a century of revolution and regime change, ending with the defeat of the Franco-Prussian War, the governing institutions and heads of state lost their value as symbols of national identity. And while the nation's cities were changing unrecognisably, the history and traditions of its rural communities and provinces were a testimony to the continuity of the French people.

From a political perspective, the timelessness of this 'popular' history also provided appropriate iconography for the democratic, anti-monarchist and nationalist ideals of the Opportunist Republic. Even a century later in 1981, it was no coincidence that the posters for François Mitterrand's socialist presidential campaign were founded on the image of a French village, with the caption 'la force tranquille' (fig.217). The contrast to his vision of modern pylons used in his unsuccessful campaign of 1965 is stark. Rather than the image of modernity and change, it was clearly the strength and unity of the rural village that was most

resonant among the French electorate. The effect was no different to that conveyed by the village landscapes of the nineteenth century. An intrinsic feature of the French rural landscape and *la France profonde*, the village was a potent symbol of national cultural identity. It was inherently indicative of a certain type of people, living a certain lifestyle, within the natural and national landscape. The village represented the roots of French society and an un-forgetting witness of history and tradition. The significance of the motif lay not in depicting specific places, therefore, but rather as a microcosm of the greater community, and as such a focus for its hopes and fears.

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49. Monet, C., *Au bord de l'eau, Bennecourt*, 1868, 0.81 x 1.00m, Art Institute of Chicago (W.110)
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52. Harpignies, H., *Vue du Colisée*, 1878, 0.47 x 0.67m, Musée d'Orsay, Paris
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54. Monet, C., *La prairie*, 1880, 0.79 x 0.98m, Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha (W.535)
55. Villeneuve, L.J.F., *Vue de l'église de Vétheuil*, 1819, lithograph, département des estampes et de la photographie, Bibliothèque National de France, Paris
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66. Corot, C., *Ville d'Avray, Entrance to a Wood*, c.1825 and 1850, 0.46 x 0.35m, National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh
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70. Millet, J.-F., *Un bout du village de Gréville*, c.1865-6, 0.86 x 1.00m, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
71. Bernier, C., *D'Annadour, Bannalec*, c.1873, 1.66 x 2.43m, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Angers
72. Perret, A., *Une baptême bressan*, 1877, dimensions unavailable, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon
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80. Van Gogh, V., *L'Église d'Auvers*, 1890, 0.94 x 0.75m, Musée d'Orsay, Paris
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98. Defaux, A., *En Bretagne*, n.d., 0.53 x 0.39m, Sotheby's, New York, 17 February 1993, no.73
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130. Lévy, H., *Le travail sous l'égide de la République amène l'abondance et la prospérité* (detail), 1886, oil and ink on canvas, 1.00 x 0.81, (preparatory work for 'l'escalier d'honneur', Mairie de Pontin) Petit Palais, Paris
131. Baudouin, P., *Famille et Travail*, 1882, 'salle des mariages', Mairie de Saint-Maur, Paris
132. Tanoux, A., *La noce*, 1888, 0.55 x 0.92m, (preparatory work for the 'salles des mariages', Mairie du XIVe) Petit Palais, Paris
133. Karbowsky, A., *La jeunesse*, 1889, 0.55 x 0.71, (preparatory work for the 'salle des mariages', Mairie de Nogent-sur-Marne) Petit Palais, Paris
134. Karbowsky, A., *Le labourage*, 1889, 'salle des mariages' Mairie de Nogent-sur-Marne
135. Karbowsky, A., *Le villégiature*, 1889, 'salle des mariages' Mairie de Nogent-sur-Marne
136. Le Marié des Landelles, E., *Les onze acres*, 1887, illustration from *Le Salon Illustré*, 1887
137. Pissarro, C., *Harvest Landscape at Pontoise*, 1873, 0.65 x 0.81m, private collection
138. Monchablon, J.-F. (known as Jan), *Campagne lorraine en automne*, n.d., 0.93 x 1.26m, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nancy
139. Bastien-Lepage, J., *L'Amour au village*, 1882, 1.94 x 1.80m, Pushkin Museum, Moscow
140. Stop, Bastien-Lepage // Peut-être ne remarque-t-on pas assez la force exceptionnelle de ce jeune rustre, qui se nettoie négligemment les ongles, sans paraître s'apercevoir qu'il porte un village entier sur la tête, "Le Salon de 1883" *Le Journal Amusant*, 26 May 1883, p.5
141. Perret, A., *Le printemps de la vie*, 1885, illustration from *Le Salon Illustré*, 1885
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145. Pissarro, C., *The Threshing Machine*, 1876, 0.54 x 0.65m, private collection
146. Rousseau, T., *Le pont à Moret*, c.1828-29, dimensions unavailable, Smith College of Art, Northampton
147. Petitjean, E., *Vieux village de France*, n.d., 1.55 x 1.96m, private collection
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151. Sisley, A., *Vieilles maisons à Saint-Mammès, automne*, 1880, 0.50 x 0.65m, private collection (D.373)
152. Sisley, A., *Soleil du matin à Saint-Mammès*, 1884, 0.50 x 0.65m, private collection (D.550)
153. Sisley, A., *Saint-Mammès, le matin*, 1881, 0.50 x 0.73m, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (D.421)
154. Sisley, A., *Chantier à Saint-Mammès*, 1885, 0.55 x 0.73m, Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio (D. 579)
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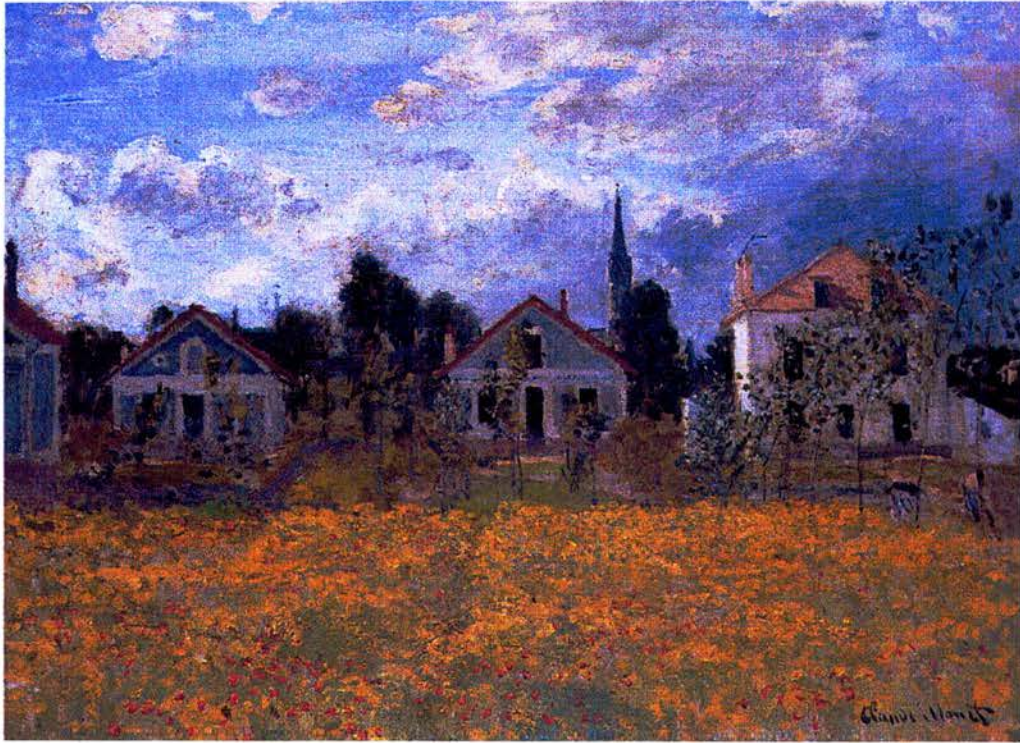
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9. Herpin, L., *Environs de Cherbourg*, 1877, illustration from DURANTY, 1877, p55



10. Guillemet, A., *Villerville (Calvados)*, 1876, 1.31 x 2.02m, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Caen



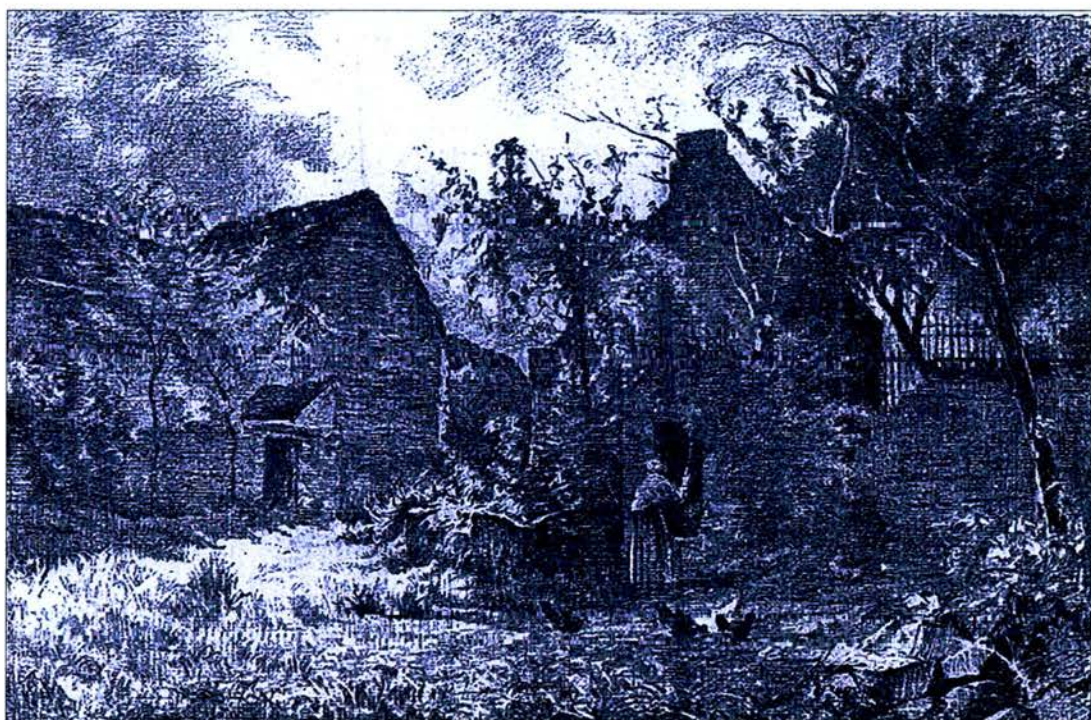
11. Brioux, L., *Entrée du village de Saint-Cenery (Orne)*, 1883, 1.15 x 1.35m, illustration from *Le Salon Illustré*, 1883



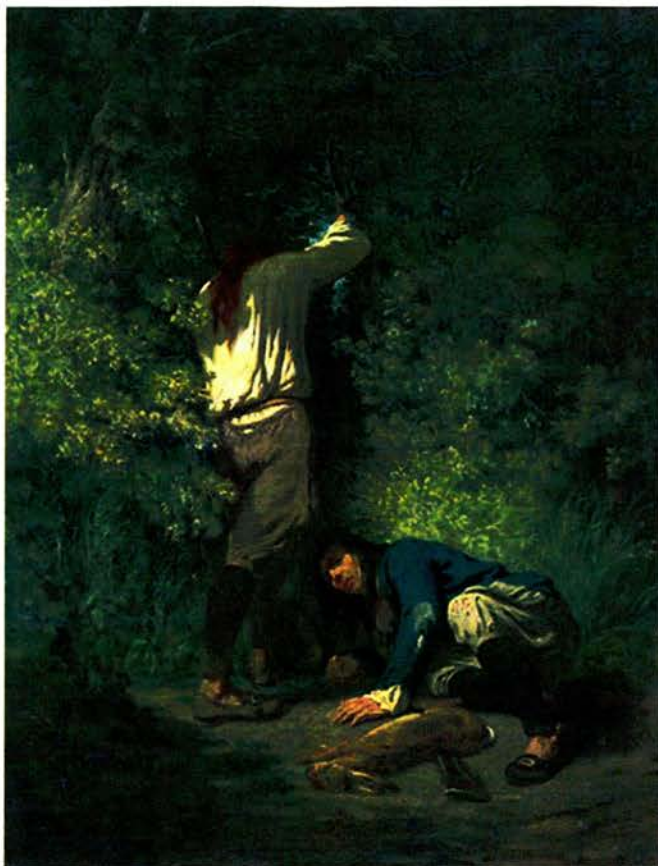
12. Pissarro, C., *Les toits rouges*, 1877, 0.55 x 0.66m, Musée d'Orsay, Paris



13. Isembart, É., *Avril en Franche-Comté*, 1886, illustration from RITTER, 1922, pl.23



14. Beauverie, C.J., *Les mesures à Auvers*, 1883, 0.85 x 1.20m, illustration from *Le Salon Illustré*, 1883



15. Luminais, É.-V., *Retour de chasse*, c.1861, 1.17 x 0.90m, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Quimper



16. Neuville, A. de, *Combat sur les toits*, n.d., illustration from a series of sepia art prints *Episodes Militaires*, Goupil & Cie., Paris, 1885



17. Rigolot, A., *La moisson en Seine et Marne*, n.d., 0.47 x 0.65m, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nancy



18. Pelouse, L., *Le soir*, c.1885, 1.32 x 1.63m, Musée de Grenoble



19. Pelouse, L., *Cernay, près de Rambouillet*, c.1887, 0.9 x 1.17m, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



20. Flandrin, P., *Souvenir de Provence*, 1874, 0.9 x 1.16m, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon



21. Busson, C., *Le village de Lavardin (Loir-et-Cher)*, 1877, 1.75 x 2.2m, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Angers



22. Monet, C., *Le printemps, à travers les branches*, 1878, 0.52 x 0.63m, Musée Marmottan, Paris (W.455)



23. Corot, C., *L'Étang à l'arbre penché*, c.1865-1870, 0.44 x 0.66m, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Reims



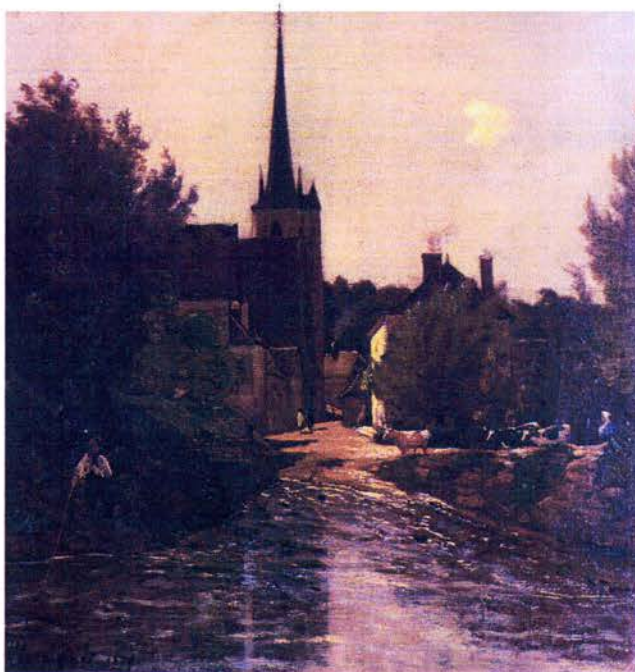
24. Barau, É., *Jardinage d'automne* (*Boult-sur-Suippe*), 1.72 x 2.60m, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Reims



25. Barau, É., *L'Été en Champagne à Fresne*, 0.44 x 0.75m, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Reims



26. Monet, C., *Vétheuil*, 1879, 0.60 x 0.81m, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, (W.533)



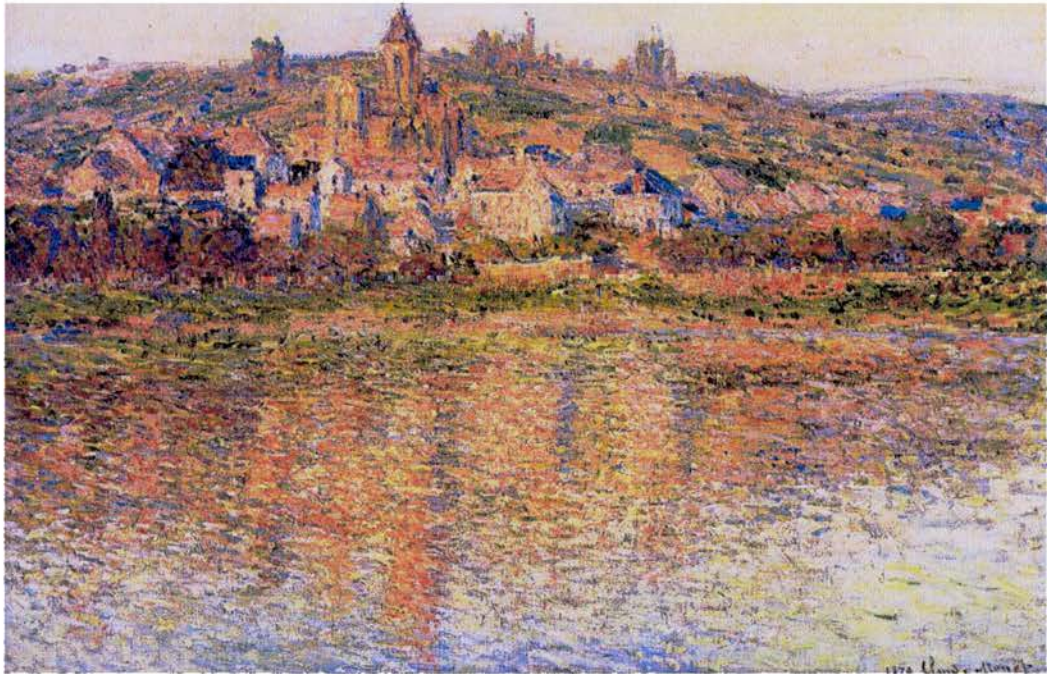
27. Harpignies, H., *La mare à Hérissons*, 1879, 0.36 x 0.28m, Christie's, London, 24 June 1983, no.56



28. Delestre, F., *La Trémellerie, Saint-Privé*, photograph, 2003



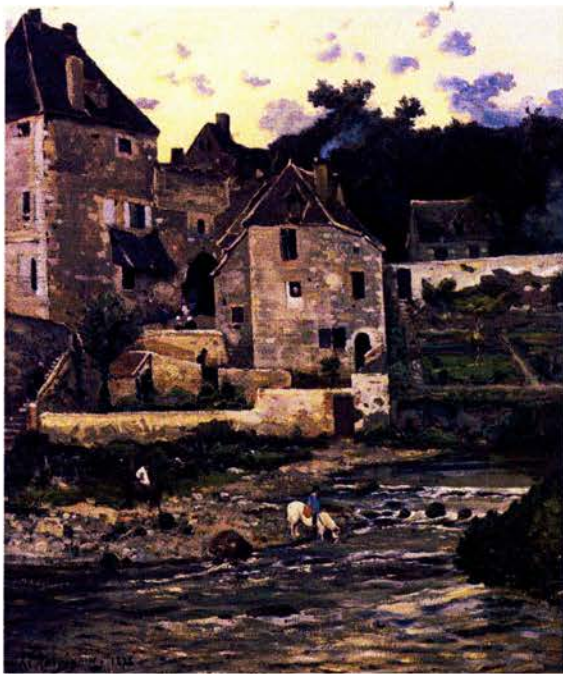
29. Clarke, M., *Monet's House at Vétheuil*, photograph, 2003



30. Monet, C., *Vétheuil en été*, 1879, 0.55 x 0.74m, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto (W.534)



31. Harpignies, H., *Paysage*, 1884, dimensions unavailable, private collection



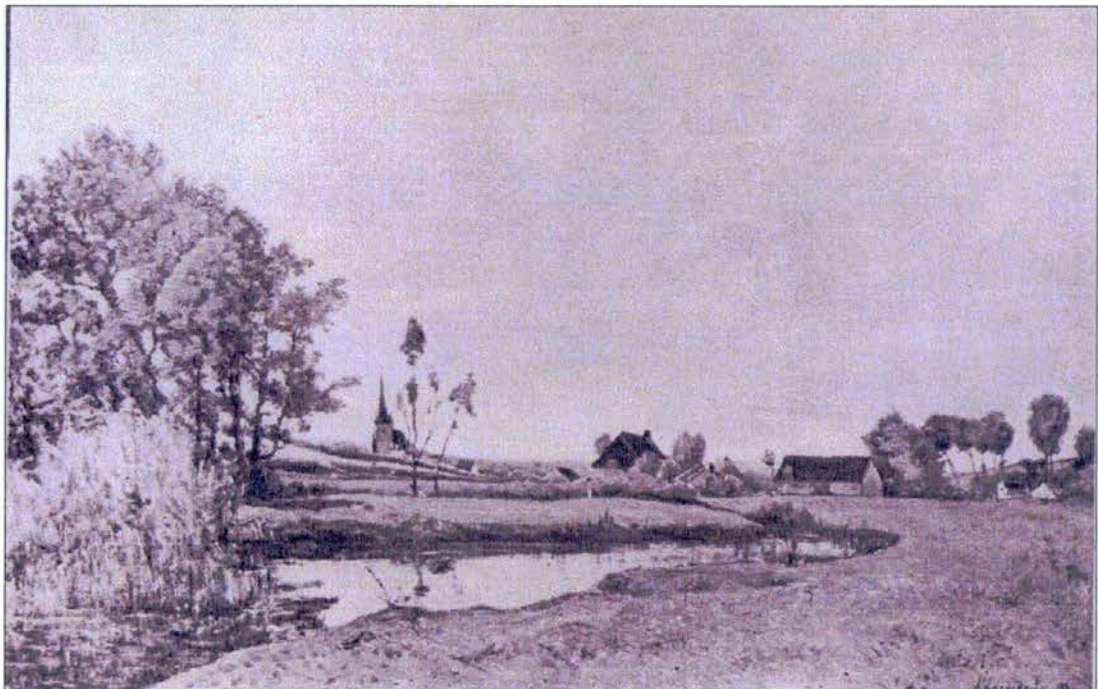
32. Harpignies, H., *Le village d'Hérisson au bord de l'Aumance ; Bourbonnais*, 1872, 0.65 x 0.46m, Stoppenbach and Delestre, London, (catalogue not dated)



33. Monet, C., *La route à Vétheuil, l'hiver*, 1879, 0.53 x 0.72m, Konstmuseum, Göteborg (W.510)



34. Monet, C., *Vétheuil*, 0.60 x 1.00m, Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (W.609)



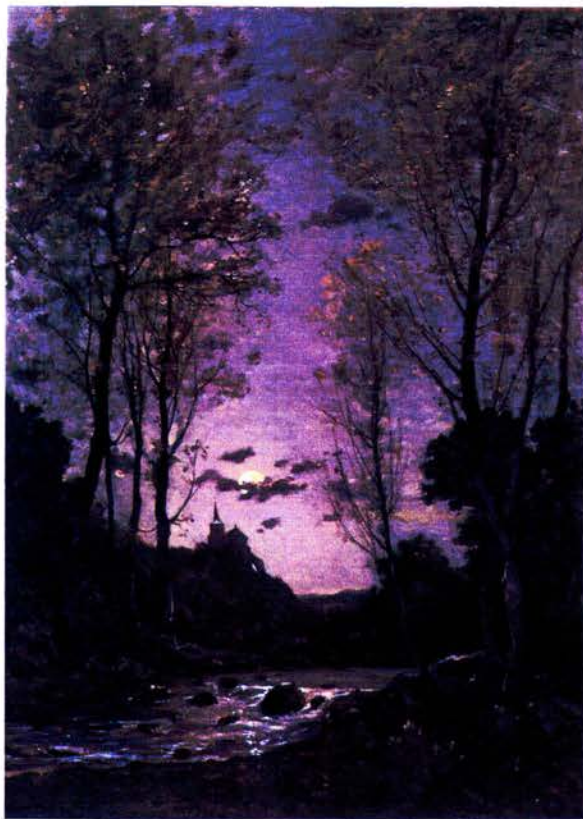
35. Harpignies, H., *Le Village au bord de la rivière*, 1882, 0.43 x 0.65m, Georges. Petit, 8 May 1919, no.14



36. Harpignies, H., *Saint-Privé – On the Outskirts of the Village*, 1886, 0.33 x 0.45m, Sotheby Parke Bernet, London, 25 March 1981, no.106



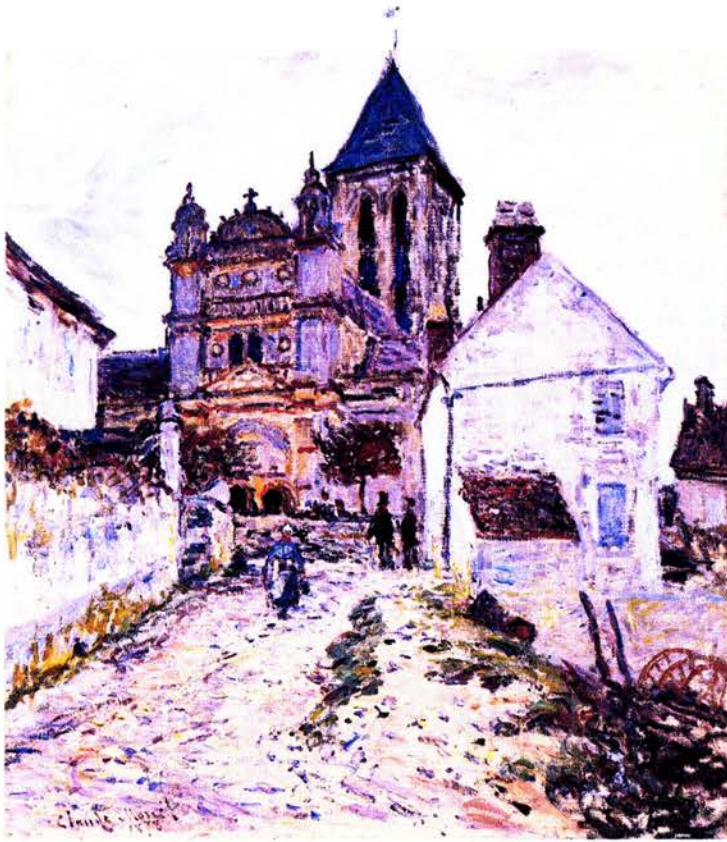
37. Harpignies, H., *Landscape with a Ploughman and Village*, 1887, 0.23 x 0.36m, Christie's, London, 29 November 1985, no.16



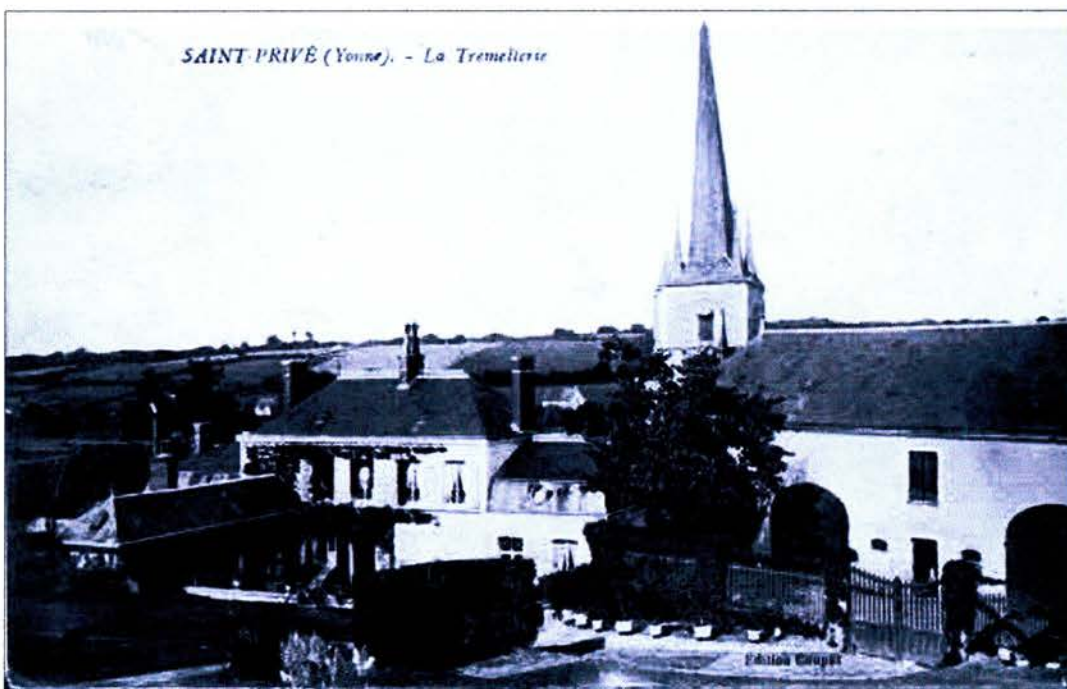
38. Harpignies, H., *Moonlight*, 1886, 0.81 x 0.59m, Sotheby's, New York, 7 May 1988, no.115



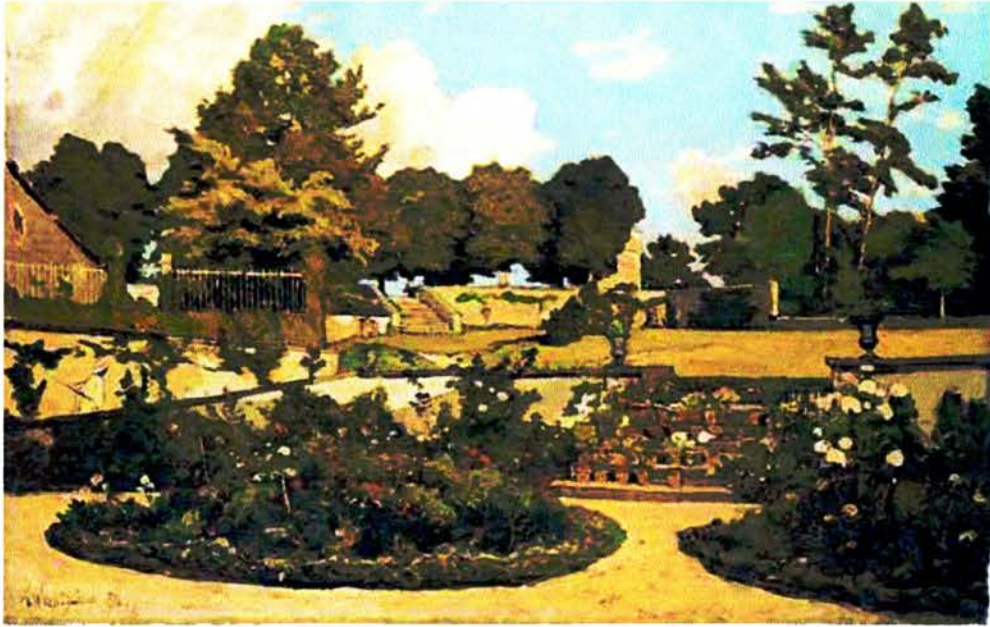
39. Harpignies, H., *View of Saint-Privé*, n.d., dimensions and location unknown



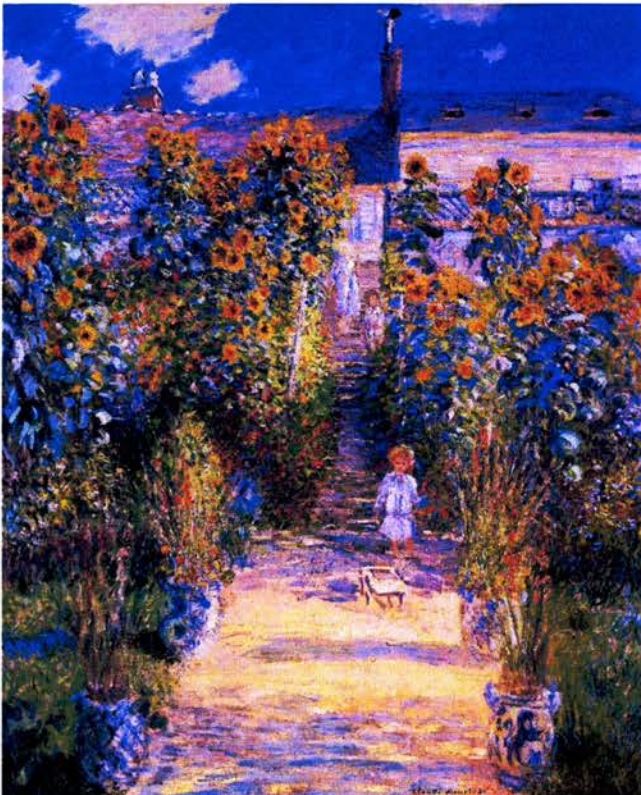
40. Monet, C., *L'Église de Vétheuil*, 1878, 0.65 x 0.55m, National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh (W.474)



41. *Saint-Privé(Yonne) – La Trémellerie*, postcard from 1918



42. Harpignies, H., *The Painter's Garden at Saint-Privé*, 1886, 0.60 x 0.81m, National Gallery, London



43. Monet, C., *Le jardin de Monet à Vétheuil*, 1881, 1.50 x 1.20m, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. (W.685)



44. Harpignies, H., *Temps de soleil à Saint-Privé*, 1886, 0.45 x 0.53m, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Reims



45. Monet, C., *La débâcle*, 1880, 0.60 x 0.99m, University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor (W.565)



46. Monet, C., *Champ de coquelicots près de Vétheuil*, 1879, 0.70 x 0.90m, Foundation E.G. Bührle, Zurich (W.536)



47. Monet, C., *Champ de blé*, 1881, 0.66 x 0.82m, Cleveland Museum of Art (W.676)



48. Monet, C., *Femme assise sous les saules*, 1880, 0.81 x 0.60m, National Gallery of Art, Washington DC (W.613)



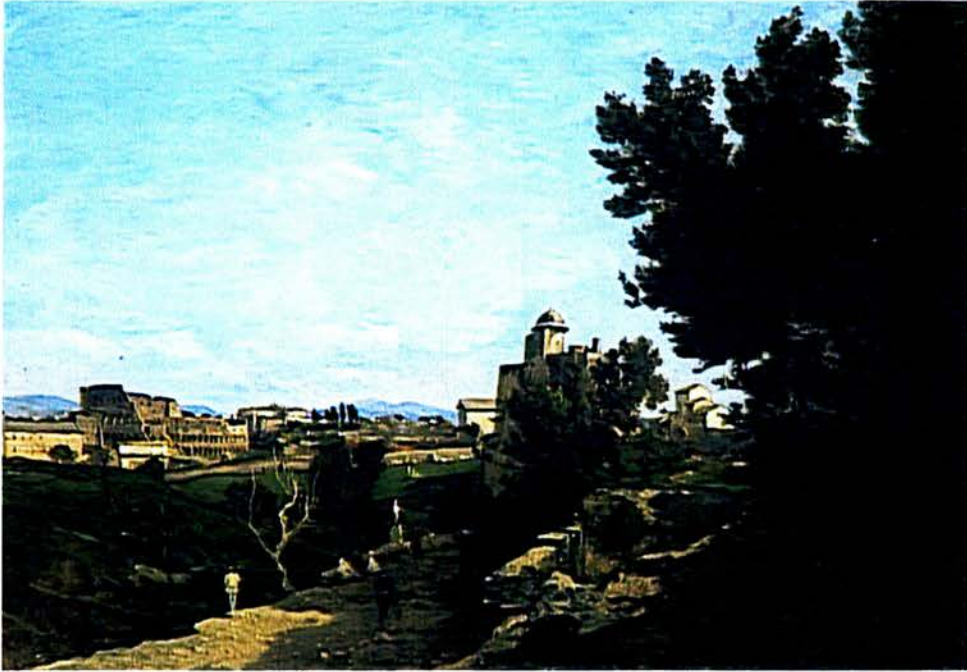
49. Monet, C., *Au bord de l'eau, Bennecourt*, 1868, 0.81 x 1.00m, Art Institute of Chicago (W.110)



50. Monet, *Vétheuil*, 1879, 0.65 x 0.92m, Triton Foundation, The Netherlands (W.527)



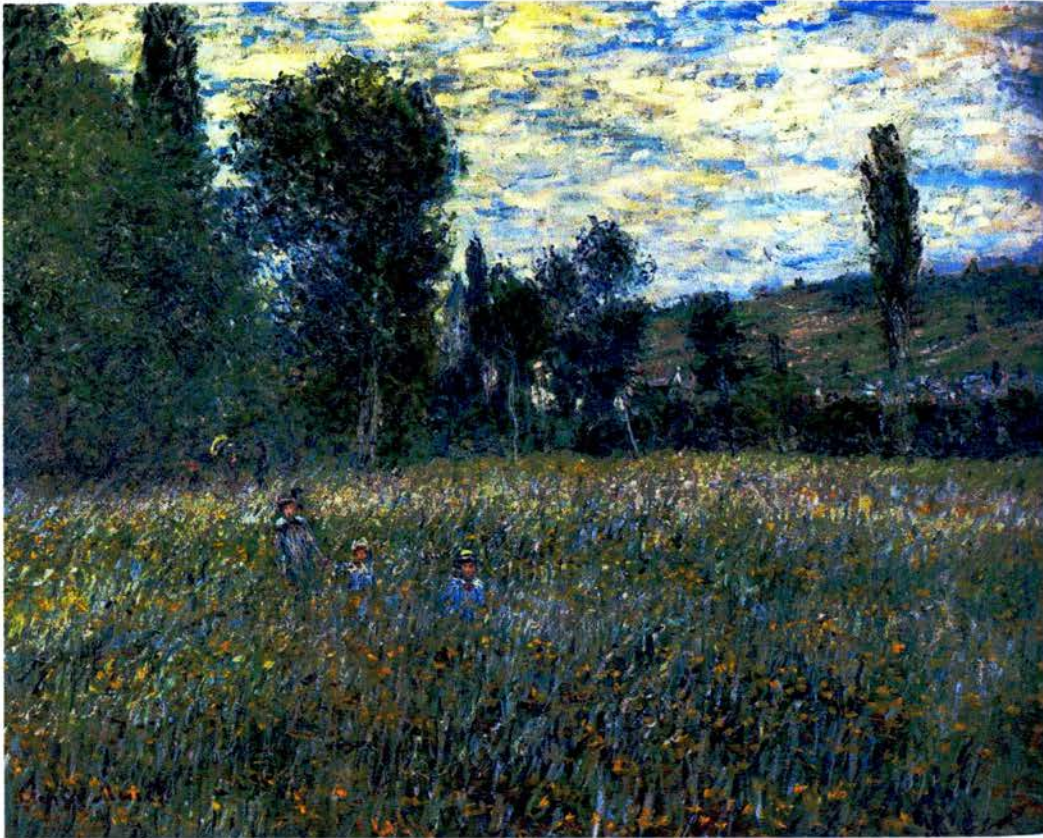
51. Monet, C., *Vétheuil dans le brouillard*, 1879, 0.60 x 0.71m, Musée Marmottan, Paris (W.518)



52. Harpignies, H., *Vue du Colisée*, 1878, 0.47 x 0.67m, Musée d'Orsay, Paris



53. Harpignies, H., *Les chênes Château-Renard (Allier)*, 1875, 1.67 x 1.09m, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Orléans



54. Monet, C., *La Prairie*, 1880, 0.79 x 0.98m, Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha (W.535)



55. Villeneuve, L., *Vue de l'église de Vétheuil*, 1819, lithograph, département des estampes et de la photographie, Bibliothèque National de France, Paris



56. Monet, C., *Lavacourt*, 1880, 1.00 x 1.50m, Dallas Museum of Art (W.578)



57. Daubigny, C.-F., *Hamlet on the Seine Near Vernon*, 1872, 1.85 x 1.46m, Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena



58. Corot, C., *Lormes, l'église*, 1842, 0.34 x 0.46m, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford



59. Corot, C., *Ville d'Avray*, 1870, 0.55 x 0.80m, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



60. Monet, C., *Les saules*, 1880, 0.66 x 0.82m, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington DC (W.611)



61. Daubigny, C.-F., *Sur les bords de la Seine*, 1851, 0.70 x 1.05m, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nantes



62. Monet, C., *L'Entrée du petit bras à Vétheuil*, 1880, 0.69 x 0.90m, private collection (W.601)



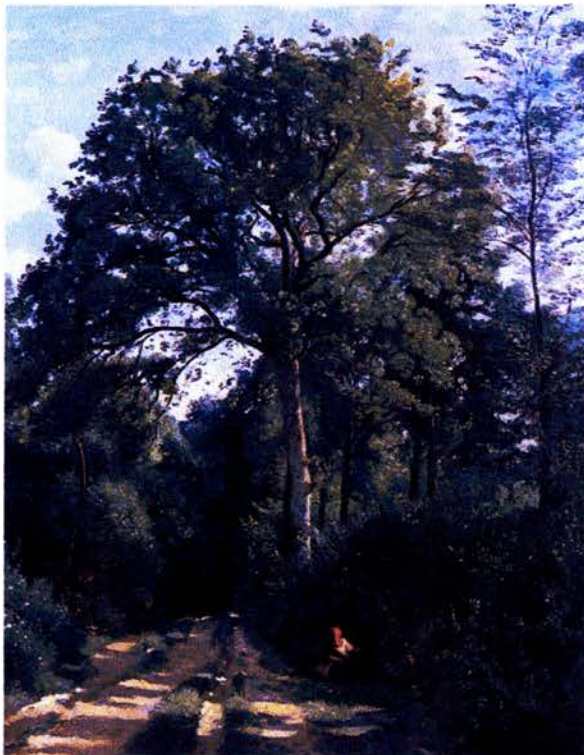
63. Valenciennes, P.-H. de, *L'Ancienne ville d'Agrigente*, 1.10 x 1.64m, Musée du Louvre, Paris



64. Remond, J., *Carloman blessé à mort dans la forêt d'Yveline*, 1821, 1.88 x 2.79m, Musée du Louvre, Paris



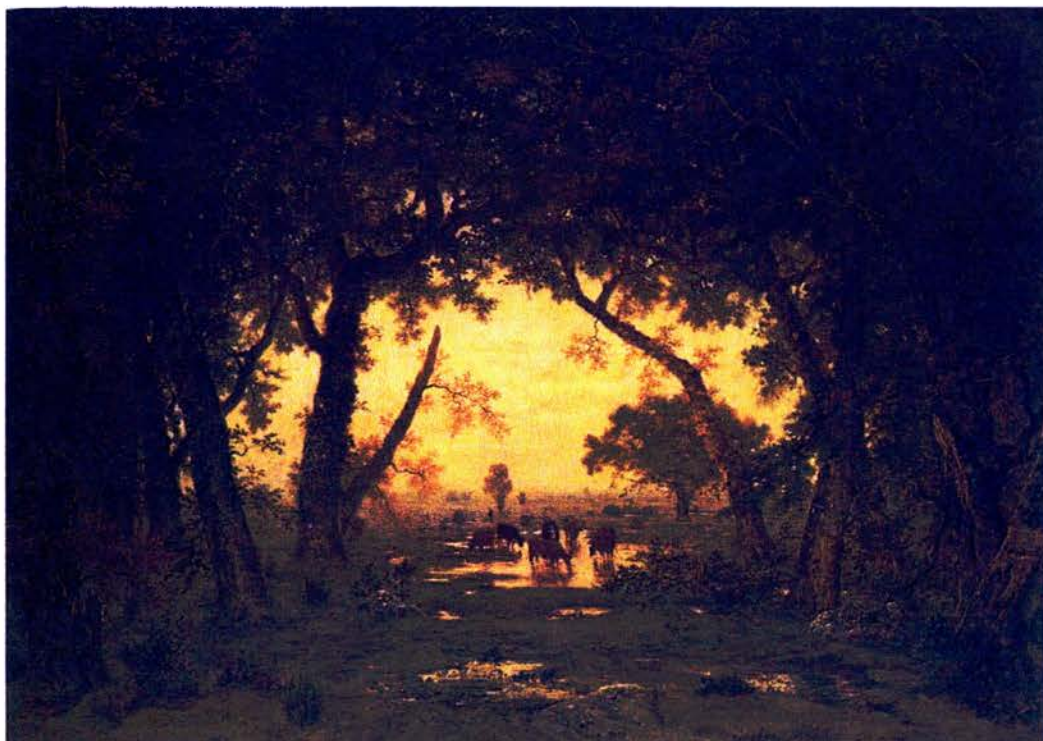
65. Benoist, F., *Ruines du château de Tonquédec*, lithograph from Charpentier, H. (Ed.), *La Bretagne contemporaine*, 3 Vols, 1864-1866; reproduced in RENAULT, 1998, p.14



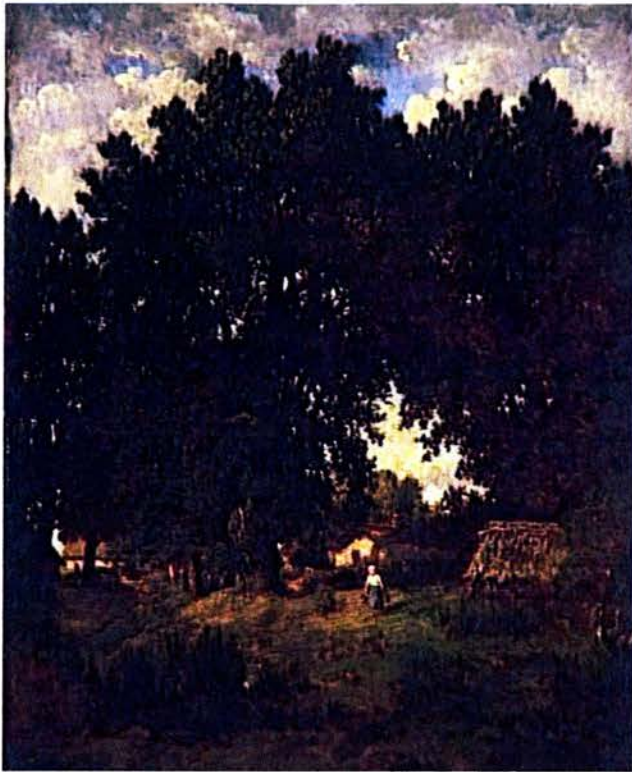
66. Corot, C., *Ville d'Avray, Entrance to a Wood*, c.1825 and 1850, 0.46 x 0.35m, National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh



67. Chintreuil, A., *Sous-bois*, n.d., 0.51 x 0.66m, Musée de Brou, Bourg-en-Bresse



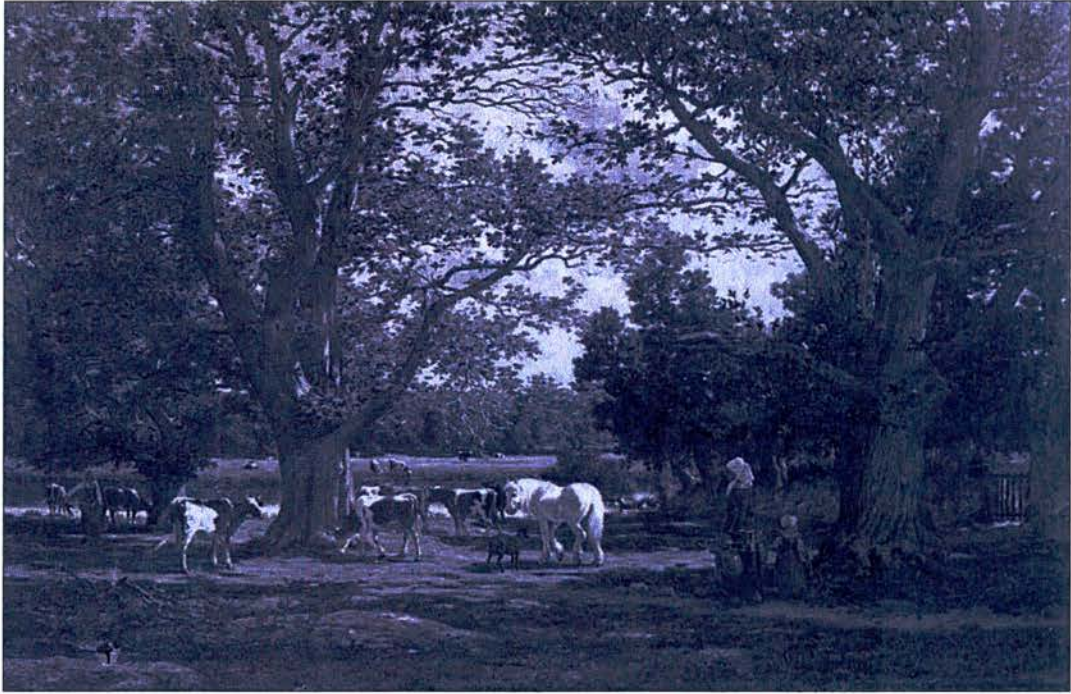
68. Rousseau, T., *Lisière de forêt; effet de matin*, 1850, 0.98 x 1.34m, Wallace Collection, London



69. Rousseau, T., *Village sous les arbres*, n.d., oil on board, 0.73 x 0.59m, Musée du Louvre, Paris



70. Millet, J.-F., *Un bout du village de Gréville*, c.1865-6, 0.86 x 1.00m, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston



71. Bernier, C., *D'Annadour, Bannalec*, c.1873, 1.66 x 2.43m, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Angers



72. Perret, A., *Une Baptême Bressan*, 1877, dimensions unavailable, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon



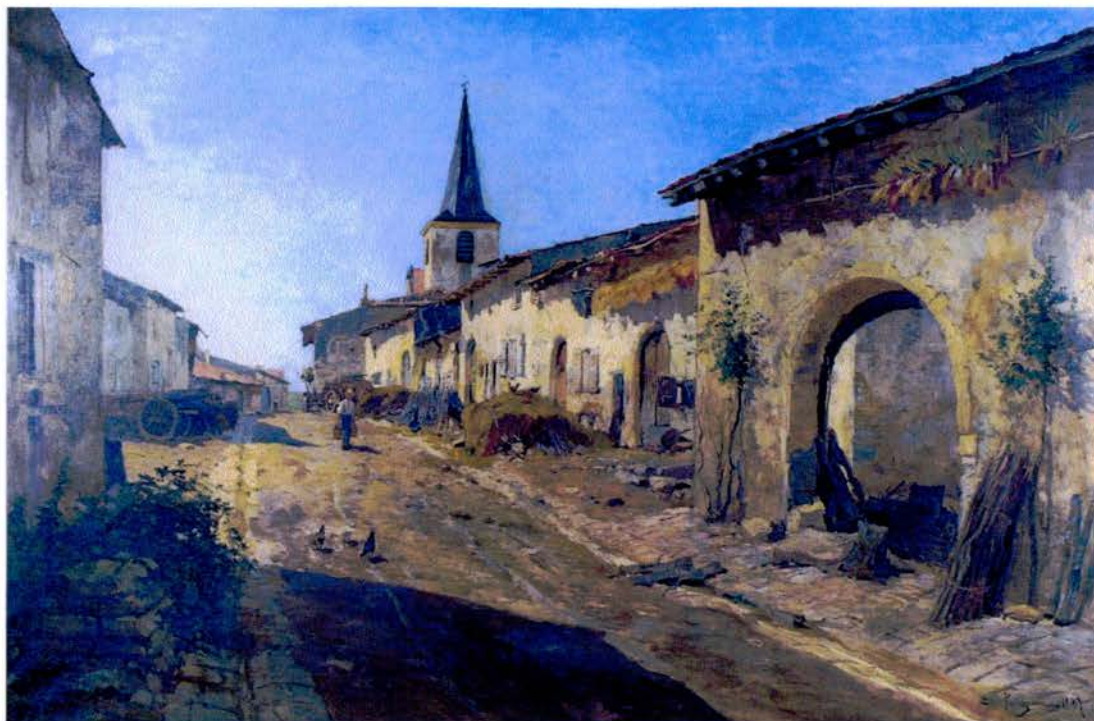
73. Montlevault, C., Paysage, n.d., 0.30 x 0.39m, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon



74. Lansyer, E., *Le Vallon de Kergueler*, 1885, 0.40 x 0.60m, Musée de Loches, Loches



75. Millet, J.-F., *L'Angélus*, 1857-59, 0.55 x 0.66m, Musée d'Orsay, Paris



76. Petitjean, E., *Un village lorrain*, 1887, 1.30 x 1.94m, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nancy



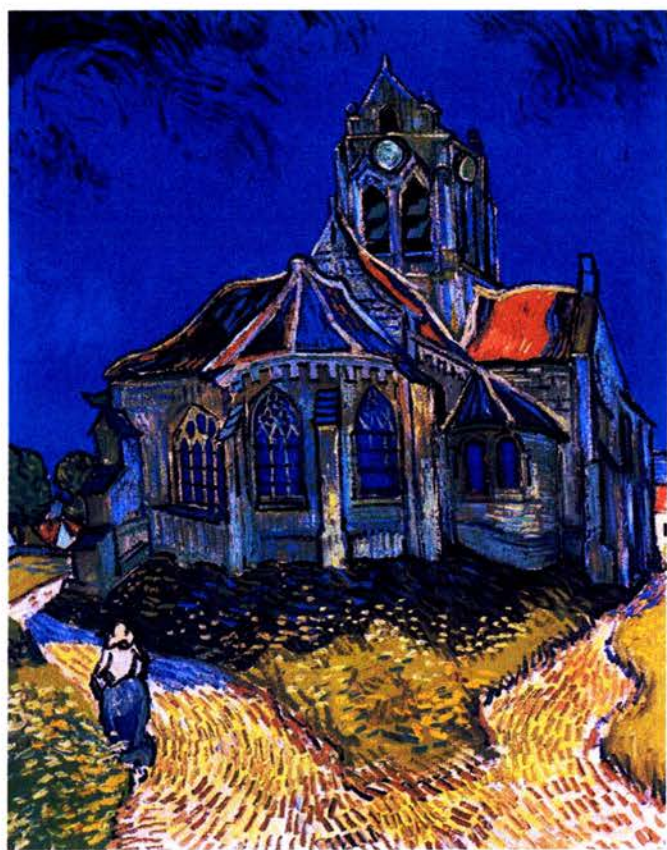
77. Petitjean, E., *Un village comtois*, 1887, dimensions and location unknown



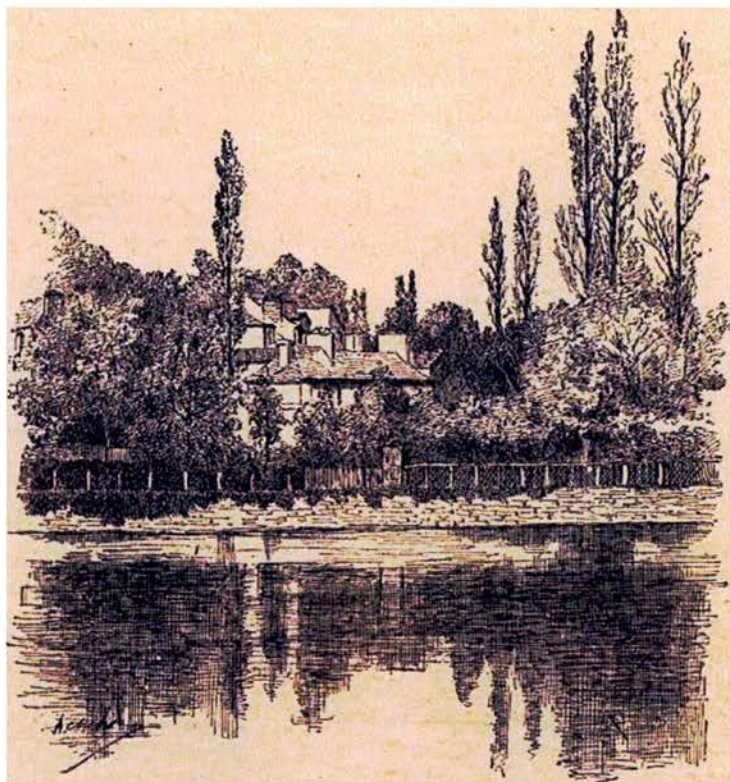
78. Dagnan-Bouveret, P., *Bretonnes au pardon*, 1887, 1.25 x 1.41m, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon



79. Van Gogh, V., *Le mairie d'Auvers*, 1890, 0.72 x 0.93m, private collection



80. Van Gogh, V., *L'Église d'Auvers*, 1890, 0.94 x 0.75m, Musée d'Orsay, Paris



ÉTANG DE VILLE D'AVRAY — MAISON DE COROT

81. Chapon, A., *Étang de Ville d'Avray – Maison de Corot*, illustration for BARRON, 1890, p.196



82. Dubourg, L.-A., *Sea Bathing at Honfleur*, 1869, 0.50 x 0.86m, Musée Eugène Boudin, Honfleur



83. Chenantais, J.E., *Huelgoat, le chaos*, 1880, 0.62 x 0.98m, Musée des Jacobins, Morlaix



84. Photograph of Huelgoat from the Parc naturel régional d'Armorique tourist information website: <http://www.pnr-armorique.fr/fr/communes/huelgoat.html>



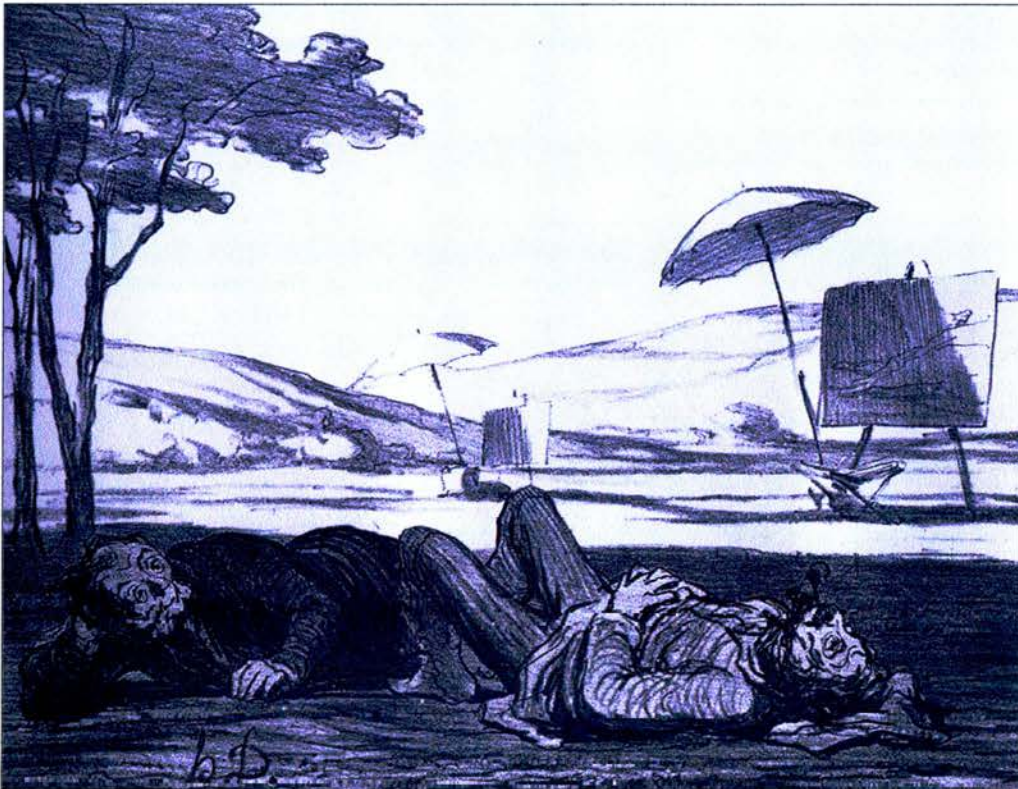
85. Boudier, E.L., *Village à Tremalo*, 1879, 1.81 x 2.51 m Musée des Beaux-Arts, Quimper



86. Ségé, A., *Les chênes de Kertrégonnec*, 1870, 1.35 x 2.04m, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Chartres



87. Renoir, A., *La Grenouillère*, 1869, 0.66 x 0.81m, National Museum, Stockholm



88. Daumier, H., *Landscapists at Work*, lithograph, 1862, 0.32 x 0.44, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



89. Daubigny, C.-F., *Entrée de Kérité*, 1871, 0.46 x 0.86m, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Reims



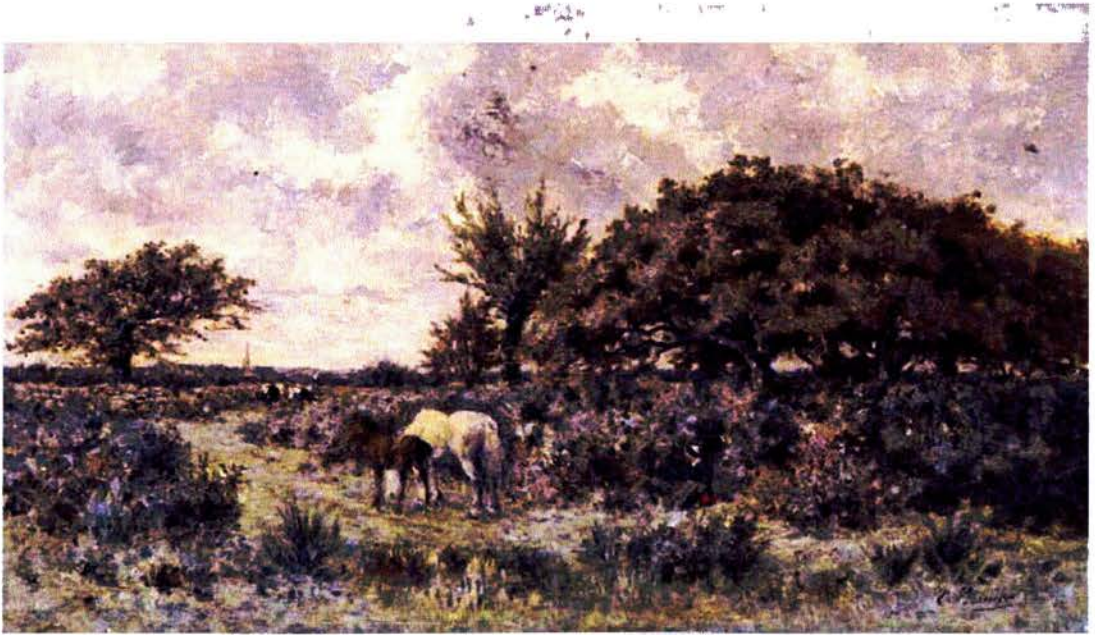
90. Monet, C., *Belle-Ile en Mer*, 1886, 0.60 x 0.60m, Musée des Jacobins, Morlaix (W.1120)



91. Lansyer, E., *Lande de Tréota*, 1885, 0.41 x 0.56m, Musée de Loches



92. Ségé, A., *La Vallée de Ploukermeur*, c.1883, 1.35 x 2.04m, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Quimper



93. Bernier, C., *La lande près de carrière pouliche et poulain*, n.d., 0.45 x 1.75m, Musée Départemental Breton, Quimper



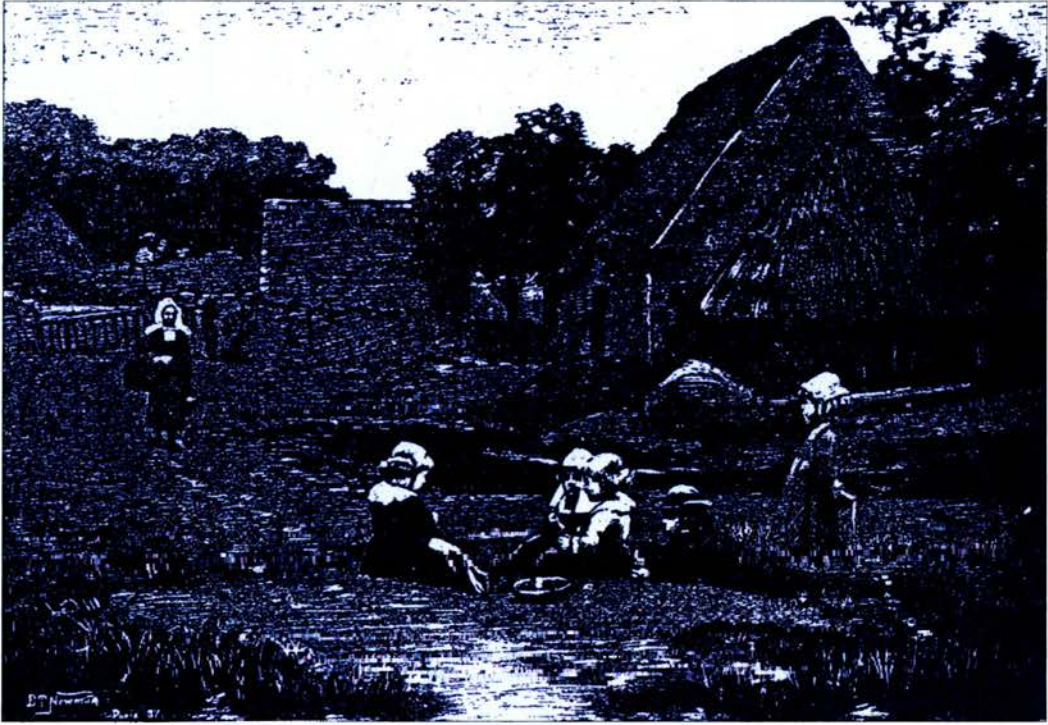
94. Le Camus, L., *L'Anse Saint-Laurent*, 1883, 2.52 x 2.02m, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Quimper



95. Quignon, F.-J., *Le blé noir*; *paysage*, illustration from *Le Salon Illustré*, 1889



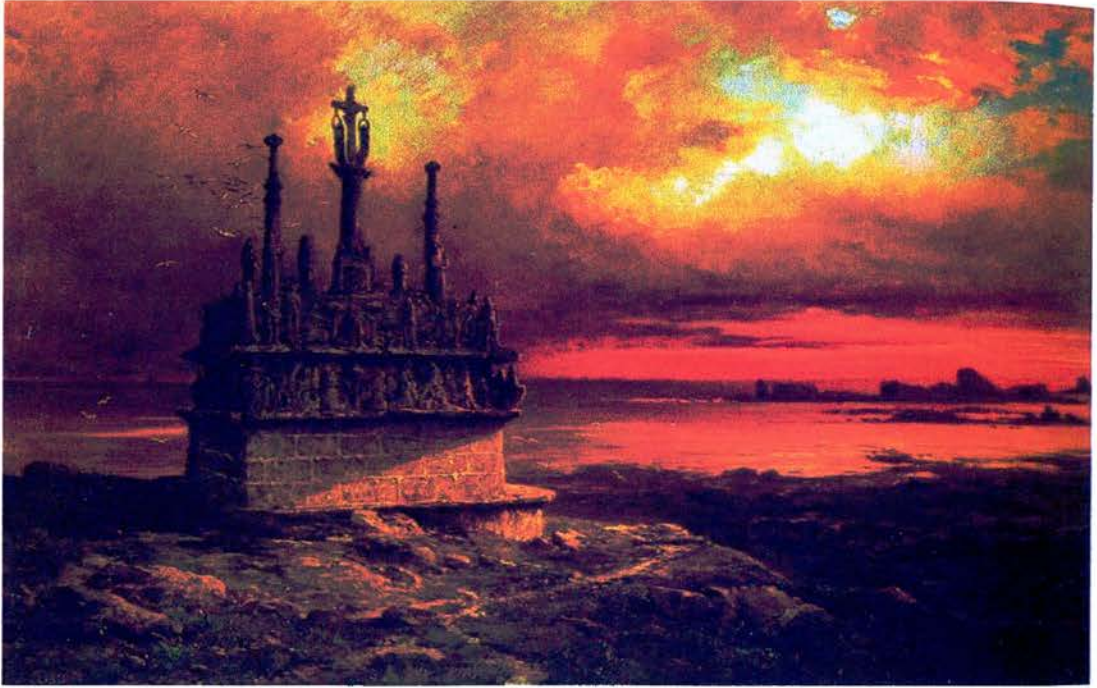
96. Luminais, E.-V., *Le pâtre de Kerlaz*, 1857, 0.86 x 1.15m, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Quimper



97. Newman, B., *Lunch, Bretagne*, illustration from *Le Salon Illustré*, 1887



98. Defaux, A., *En Bretagne*, n.d., 0.53 x 0.39m, Sotheby's, New York, 17 February 1993, no.73



99. Guiaud, J., *Le Calvaire de Tronoën*, n.d., 0.95 x 1.50m, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Brest



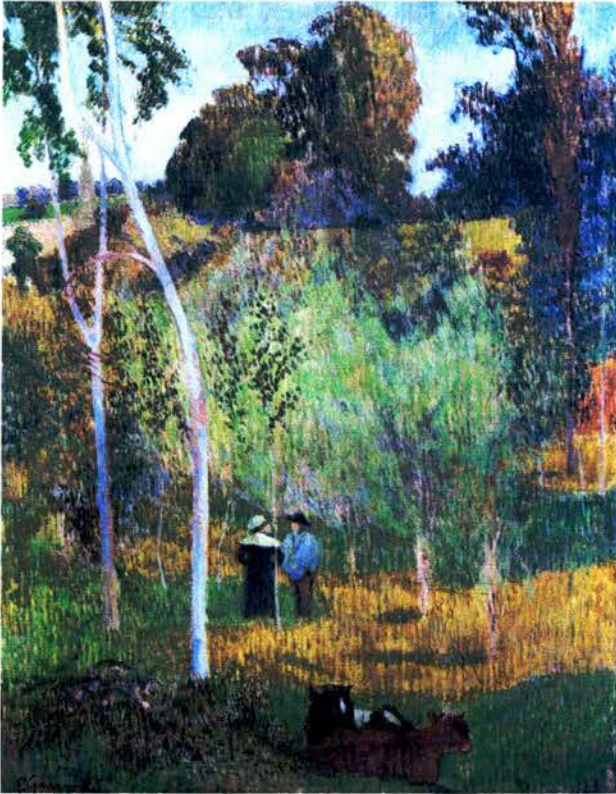
100. Lansyer, E., *Le menhir de Kergueler*, 1885, 0.40 x 0.60m, Musée de Loches



101. Gauguin, P., *Le petit berger breton*, 1888, 0.89 x 1.16m, National Museum of Art, Tokyo (W.256)



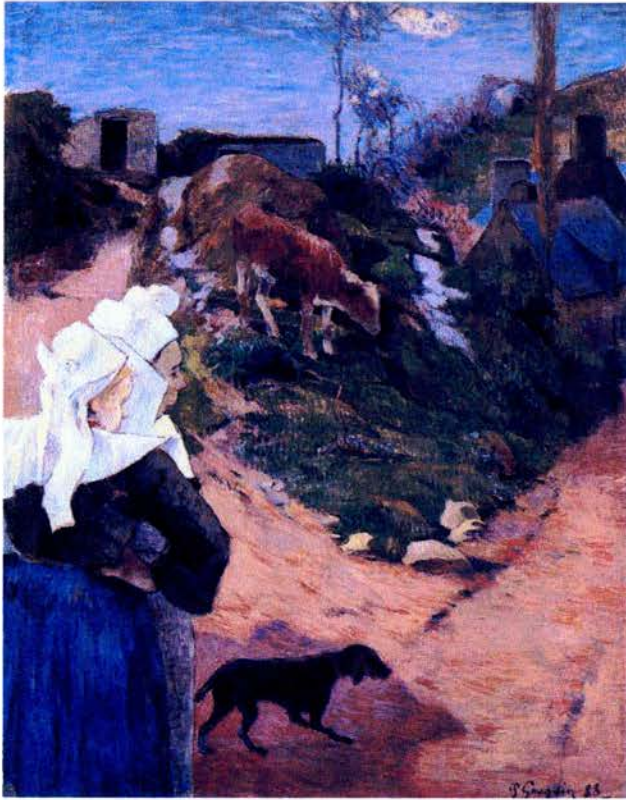
102. Gauguin, P., *Vue sur Pont-Aven prise de Lézaven*, 1888, 0.70 x 0.54m, private collection (W.281)



103. Gauguin, P., *Berger et bergère dans le pré*, 1888, 0.92 x 0.73m, Musée d'Art Moderne, Brussels (W.280)



104. Weber, O., *Retour de l'église, scène bretonne*, c.1863-1864, 0.48 x 0.63m, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lille



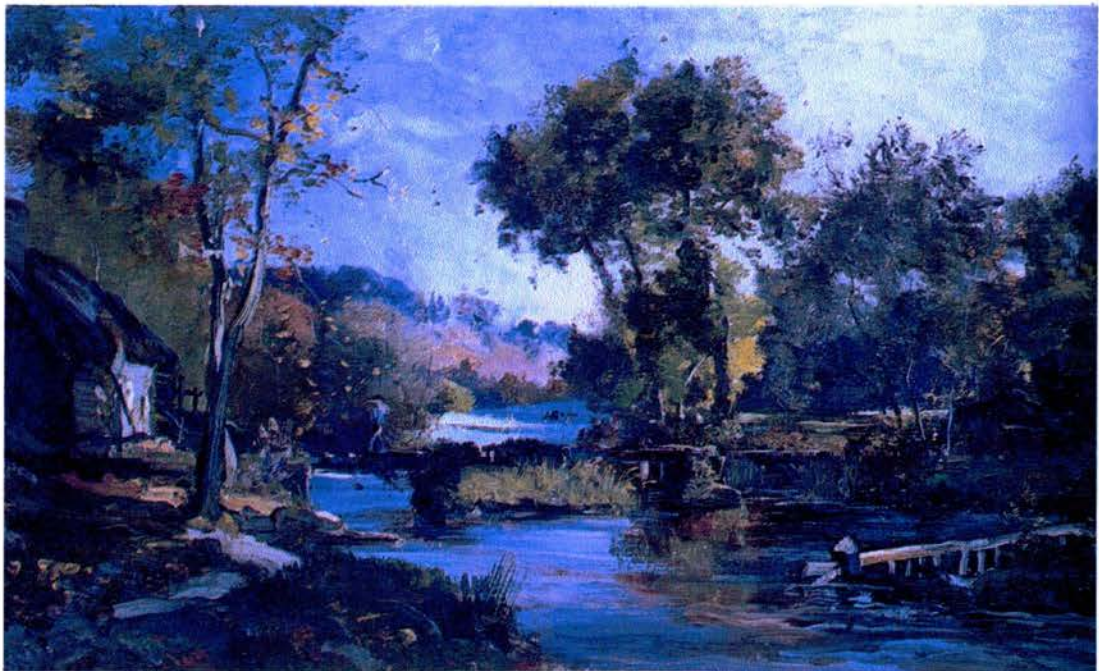
105. Gauguin, P., *Bretonnes et veau*, 1888, 0.91 x 0.72m, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen (W.271)



106. Bernard, E., *Les bretonnes dans la prairie verte*, 1888, 0.74 x 0.92, private collection



107. Bernard, E., *Marché à Pont-Aven*, 1888, 0.66 x 0.91m, Museum of Fine Art, Gifu



108. Lansyer, E., *Pont-Aven*, 1867, 0.24 x 0.39m, Musée Lansyer, Loches



109. Gauguin, P., *Le champ Derout Lollichon*, 1886, 0.73 x 0.93m, Josefowitz collection, Lausanne (W.225)



110. Gauguin, P., *Effet de neige*, 1888, 0.73 x 0.92m, Konstmuseum, Göteborg (W.264)



111. Gauguin, P., *Les lavandières de Pont-Aven*, 1886, 0.71 x 0.90m, Musée d'Orsay, Paris (W.224)



112. Roulet, G., *Port de Pont-Aven*, c.1878, 0.27 x 0.40m, Musée de Pont-Aven



113. Picknell, W., *The Port of Pont-Aven*, 1879, 0.78 x 1.16m, Phoenix Art Museum



114. Maufra, M., *Vue du port de Pont-Aven*, 1890, 1.5 x 3.01m, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Quimper



115. Gauguin, P., *La baignade devant le port de Pont-Aven*, 1886, 0.82 x 0.60m, Dixon Gallery, Memphis (W.223)



116. Gauguin, P., *Le port de Pont-Aven*, 0.73 x 0.92m, private collection (W.276)



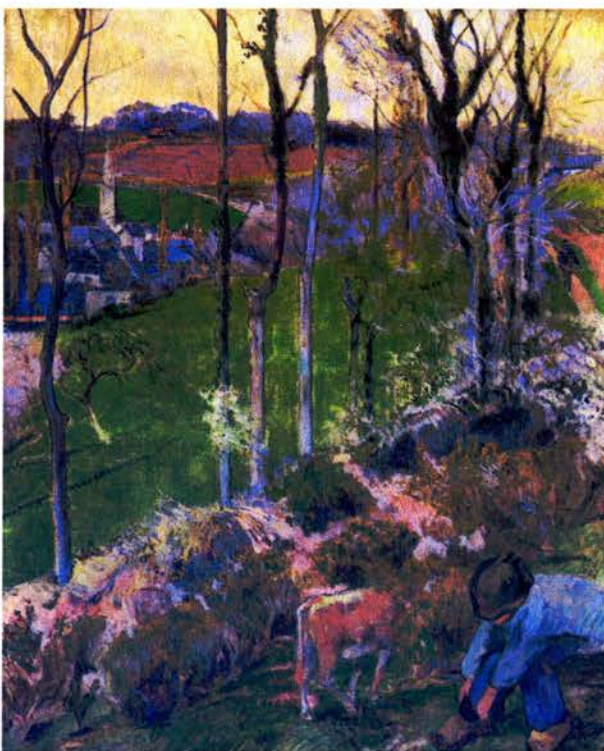
117. Gauguin, P., *Gardien de cochons*, 1888, 0.74 x 0.92, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (W.302)



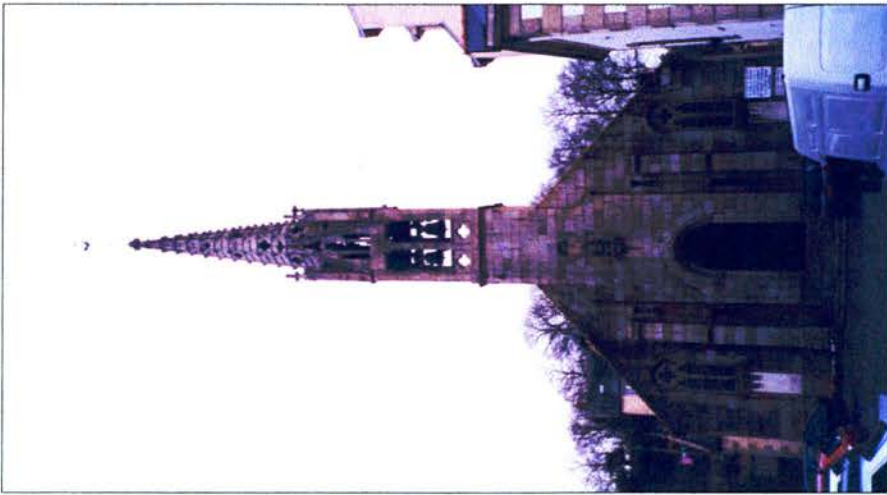
118. Gauguin, P., *La fenaison*, 1888, 0.73 x 0.92m, Musée d'Orsay, Paris (W.287)



119. Gauguin, P., *La ronde des bretonnes*, 1888, 0.72 x 0.93m, National Gallery of Art, Washington DC (W.296)



120. Gauguin, P., *Petit berger arrangeant son sabot*, 1888, 0.90 x 0.71m, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen (W.258)



121. Cowe, A., *Pont-Aven church*, photograph,
2003



122. Gauguin, P., *La vision après le sermon*, 1888, 0.73 x 0.93m, National Gallery of Scotland,
Edinburgh (W.245)



123. Bernard, E., *Cueilleuses de poires*, paint on glass, 1888, 1.16 x 0.85m,
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lille



124. Gauguin, P., *Le Christ jaune*, 1889, 0.92 x 0.73, Albright Knox
Art Gallery, Buffalo (W.327)



125. Petitjean, E., *Donjermain le Vignoble, Lorraine*, illustration for *Le Salon illustré*, 1886



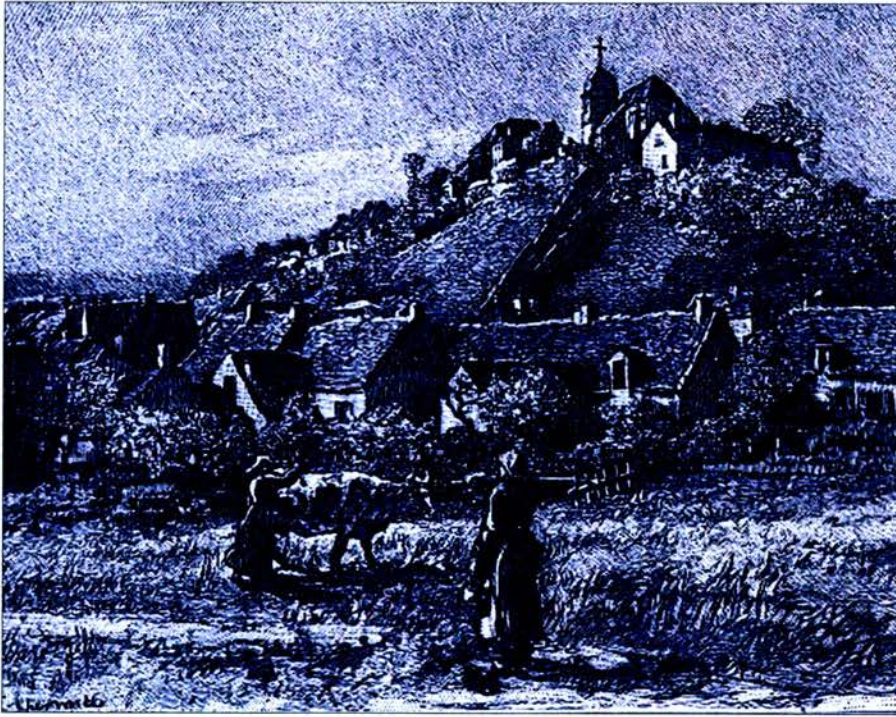
126. Boudin, E., *Le Faou, marée basse : paysage aux lavandières*, 1873, 0.37 x 0.58, Musée d'Orsay, Paris



127. Bastien-Lepage, J., *Rire d'avril*, 1883, 0.66 x 0.81m, American Art Association, New York, 10 February 1903, no.87



128. Quignon, F.-J., *La moisson*, 1890, 2.06 x 3.22m, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon



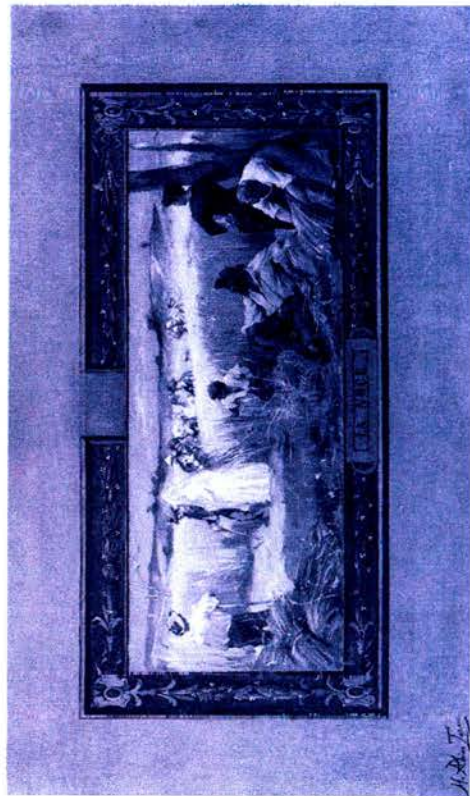
129. Lhermitte, L., illustration for THEURIET, 1888, p.244



130. Lévy, H., *Le travail sous l'égide de la République amène l'abondance et la prospérité* (detail), 1886, oil and ink on canvas, 1.00 x 0.81, (preparatory work for 'l'escalier d'honneur', Mairie de Pontin) Petit Palais, Paris



131. Baudouin, P., *Famille et Travail*, 1882, 'salle des mariages', Mairie de Saint-Maur, Paris

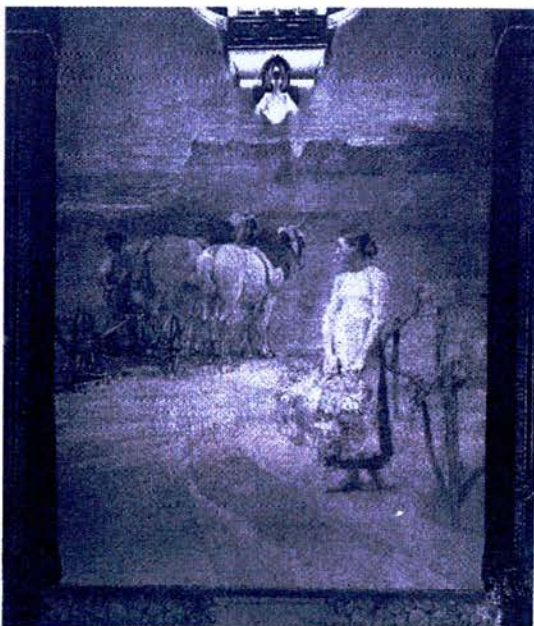


132. Tenoux, A., *La noce*, 1888, 0.55 x 0.92m, (preparatory work for the 'salles des mariages', Mairie du XIVe) Petit Palais, Paris

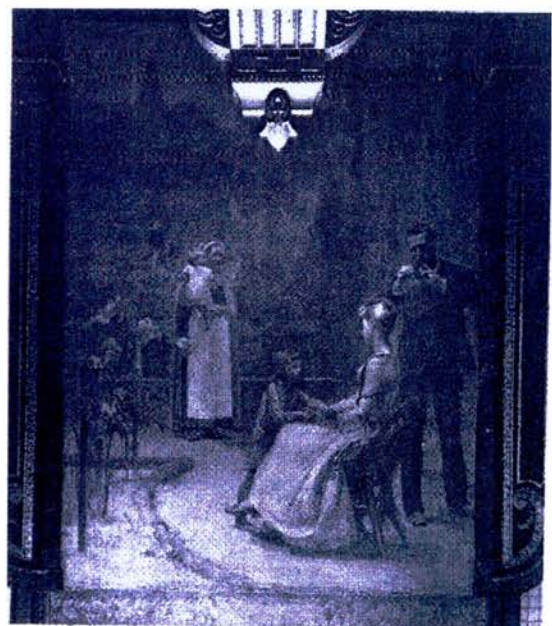


A. Karbowski.

133. Karbowski, A., *La jeunesse*, 1889, 0.55 x 0.71, (preparatory work for the 'salle des mariages', Mairie de Nogent-sur-Marne) Petit Palais, Paris



134. Karbowski, A., *Le labourage*, 1889, 'salle des mariages' Mairie de Nogent-sur-Marne



135. Karbowski, A., *Le villégiature*, 1889, 'salle des mariages' Mairie de Nogent-sur-Marne



136. Le Marié des Landelles, E., *Les onze acres*, 1887, illustration from *Le Salon Illustré*, 1887



137. Pissarro, C., *Harvest Landscape at Pontoise*, 1873, 0.65 x 0.81m, private collection

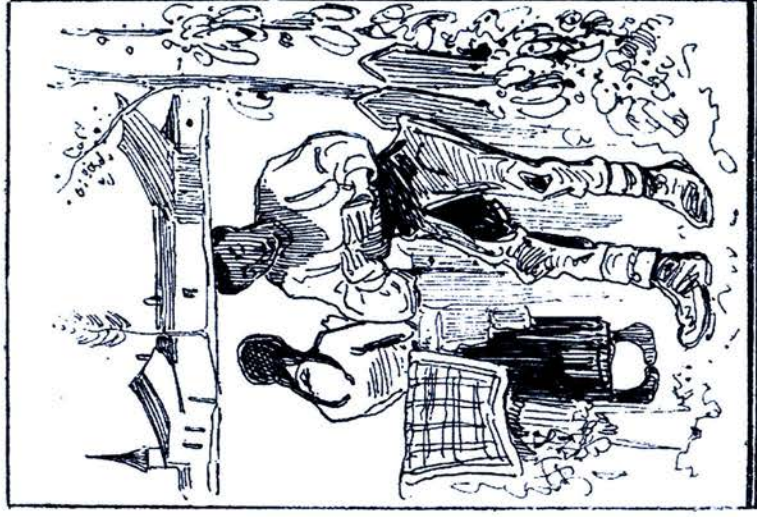


138. Monchablon, J.-F. (known as Jan), *Campagne lorraine en automne*, n.d., 0.93 x 1.26m, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nancy



139. Bastien-Lepage, J., *L'Amour au village*, 1882, 1.94 x 1.80m, Pushkin Museum, Moscow

BASTIEN LEPAGE.



Peut-être ne remarque-t-on pas assez la force exceptionnelle de ce jeune rustre, qui se nettoie négligemment les ongles, sans paraître s'apercevoir qu'il porte un village entier sur sa tête.

140. Stop, Bastien-Lepage // Peut-être ne remarque-t-on pas assez la force exceptionnelle de ce jeune rustre, qui se nettoie négligemment les ongles, sans paraître s'apercevoir qu'il porte un village entier sur la tête, "Le Salon de 1883" *Le Journal Amusant*, 26 May 1883, p.5.



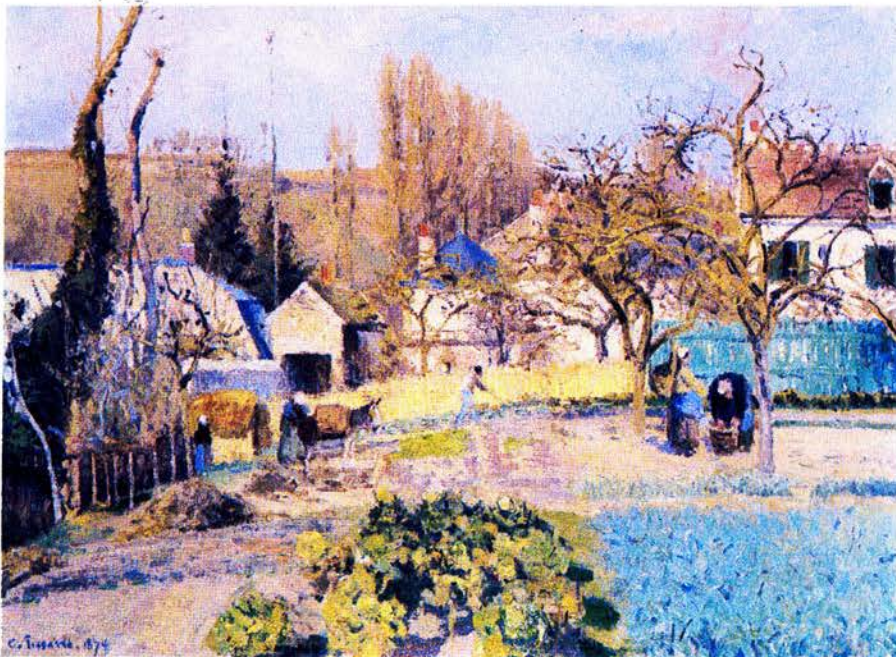
141. Perret, A., *Le printemps de la vie*, 1885, illustration from *Le Salon Illustré*, 1885



142. Gauguin, P., *Les meules*, 1890, 0.74 x 0.94m, National Gallery of Art, Washington



143. Bastien-Lepage, J., *Saison d'octobre : récolte des pommes de terre*, 1879, 1.80 x 1.96m, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne



144. Pissarro, C., *Kitchen Garden at L'Hermitage, Pontoise*, 1874, 0.54x0.65m, National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh



145. Pissarro, C., *The Threshing Machine*, 1876, 0.54 x 0.65m, private collection



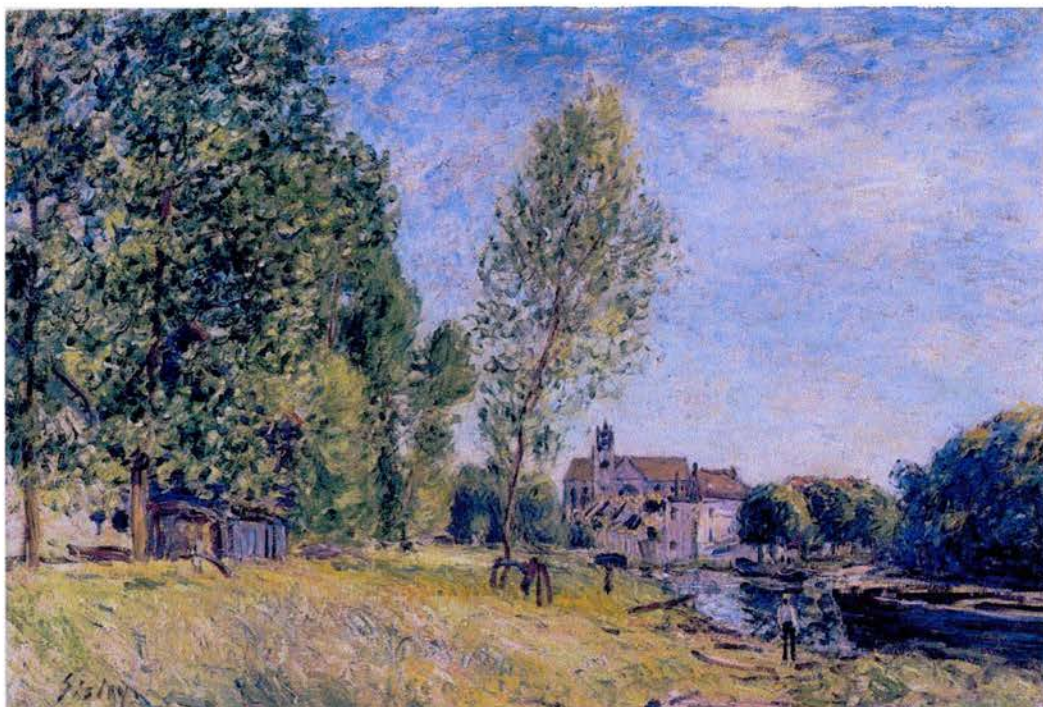
146. Rousseau, T., *Le pont à Moret*, c.1828-29, dimensions unavailable, Smith College of Art, Northampton



147. Petitjean, E., *Vieux village de France*, n.d., 1.55 x 1.96m, private collection



148. Sisley, A., *Le moulin Provencher à Moret*, c.1883, 54x73cm, Museum Boymans van Beuningen, Rotterdam (D.503)



149. Sisley, A., *Le chantier Matrat, Moret-sur-Loing*, 1882, 38 x 55cm, Musée Départementale de l'Oise, Beauvais (D. 462)



150. Guillemet, A., *Saint-Mammès, près de Moret-sur-Loing*, n.d., 0.24 x 0.33m, Christie's, London, 3 July 1987, no.521



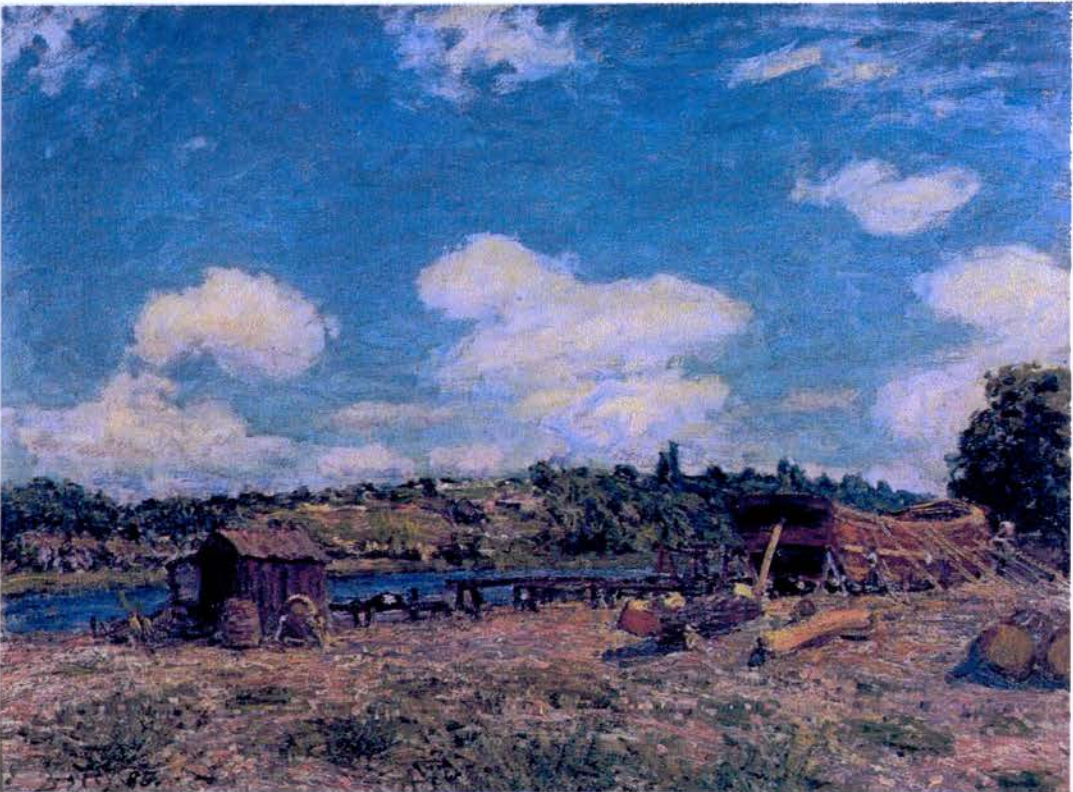
151. Sisley, A., *Vieilles maisons à Saint-Mammès, automne*, 1880, 0.50 x 0.65m, private collection (D.373)



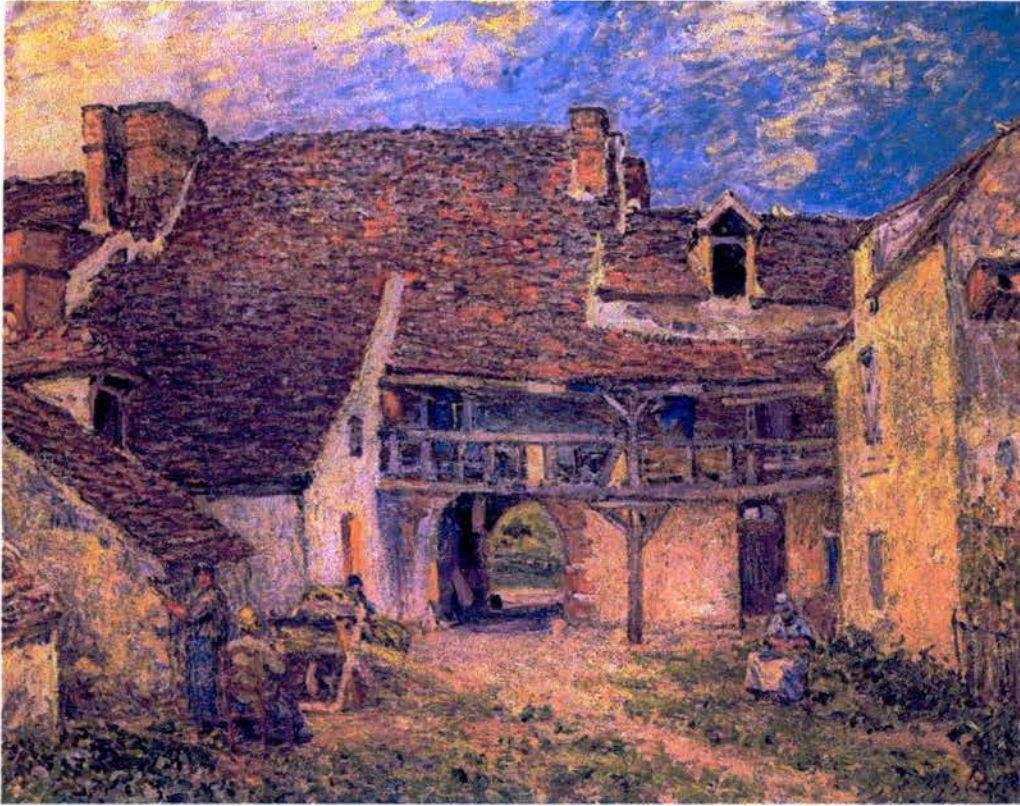
152. Sisley, A., *Soleil du matin à Saint-Mammès*, 1884, 0.50 x 0.65m, private collection (D.550)



153. Sisley, A., *Saint-Mammès, le matin*, 1881, 0.50 x 0.73m, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (D.421)



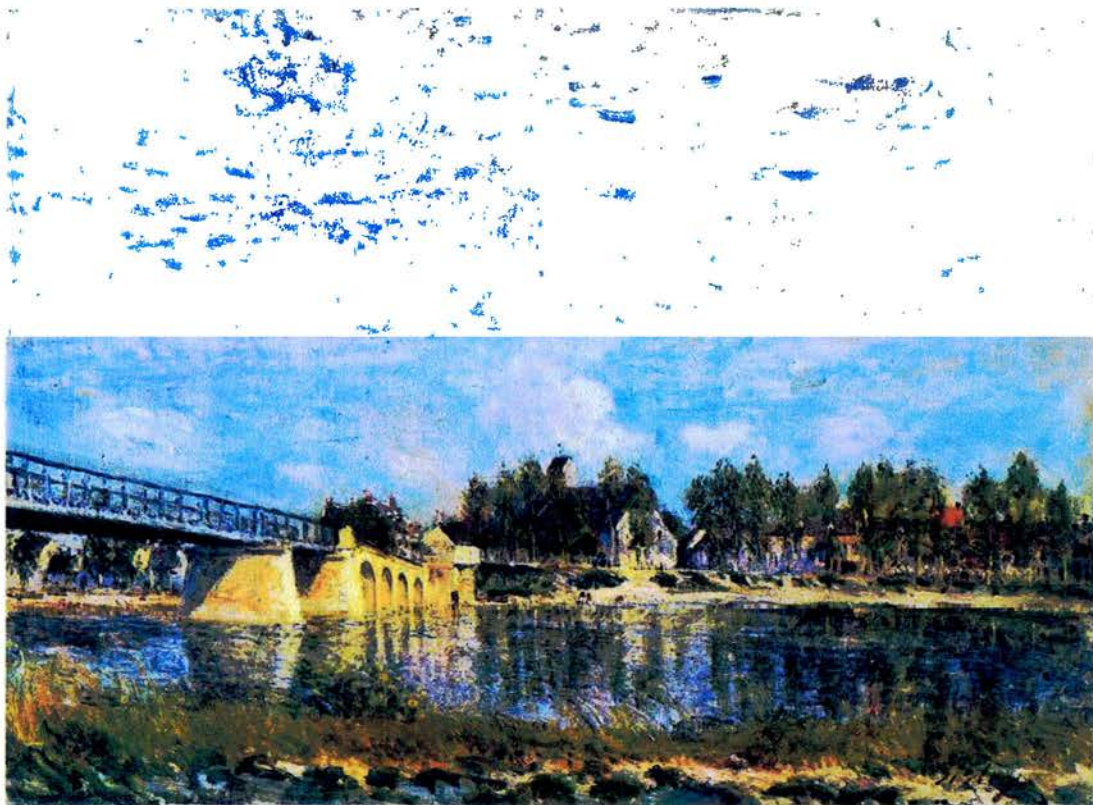
154. Sisley, A., *Chantier à Saint-Mammès*, 1885, 0.55 x 0.73m, Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio (D.579)



155. Sisley, A., *Cour de ferme à Saint-Mammès*, 1884, 0.74 x 0.93m, Musée d'Orsay, Paris (D.544)



156. Sisley, A., *Laveuses près de Champagne*, 1882, 0.50 x 0.73m, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (D.466)



157. Sisley, A., *Le pont à Saint-Mammès*, 1881, 0.54 x 0.73m, Philadelphia Museum of Art (D.424)



158. Detail



159. Sisley, A., *Le marronnier à Saint-Mammès*, 1880, 0.50 x 0.66m, Parke-Bernet, New York, 11 May 1977, no.13 (D.371)



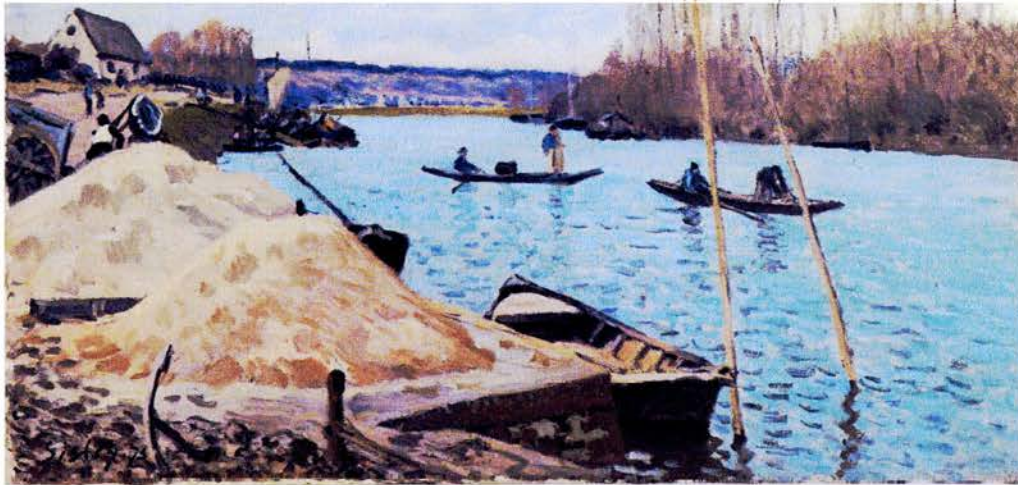
160. Sisley, A., *Chantier à Saint-Mammès*, 1880, 0.51 x 0.66m, Sotheby's, New York, 13 May 1992, no.49 (D.372)



161. Sisley, A., *Rue de village à Marlotte – près de Fontainebleau*, 1866, 0.65 x 0.90m, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo (D.3)



162. Sisley, A., *Femmes allant au bois – paysage*, 1866, 0.65 x 0.92m, Bridgestone Museum of Art, Tokyo (D.4)



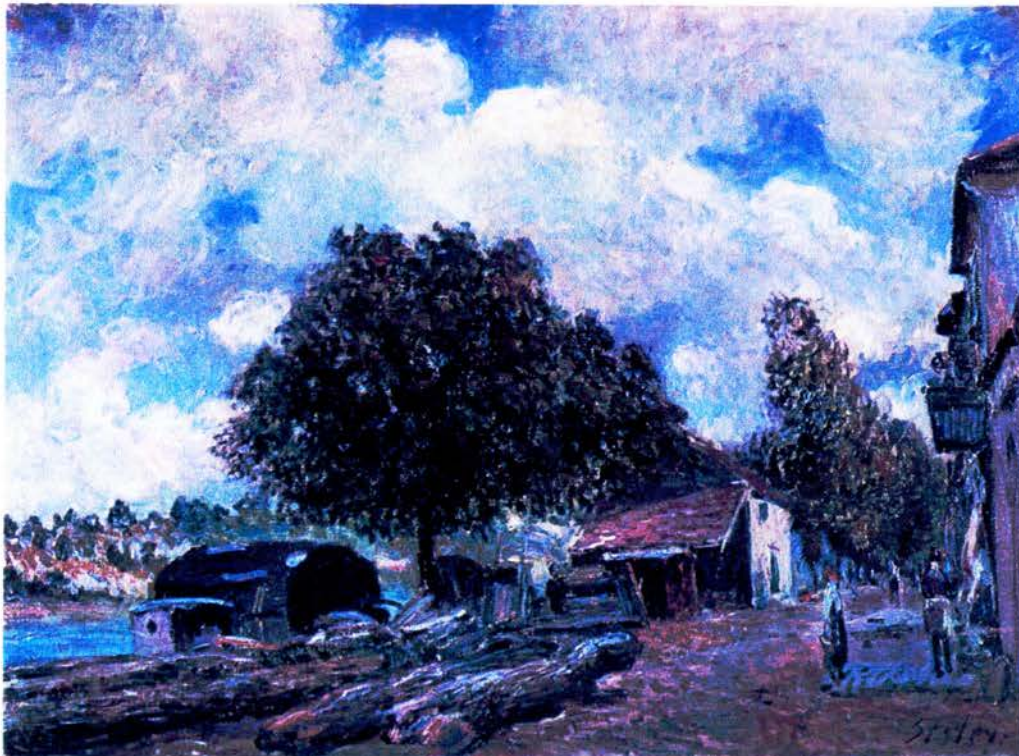
163. Sisley, A., *La Seine à Port Marly – tas de sable*, 1875, 0.55x0.74m, Art Institute of Chicago (D.176)



164. Sisley, A., *Vue de Saint-Mammès*, 1881, 0.54 x 0.73m, Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore (D.426)



165. Sisley, A., *Vue de Saint-Mammès*, 1881, 0.54 x 0.74m, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh (D.422)



166. Sisley, A., *Chantier à Saint-Mammès*, 1880, 0.54 x 0.73m, Sotheby's, New York, 19 November 1967, no.28 (D.368)



167. Sisley, A., *Saint-Mammès, le matin*, 1880, 0.65 x 0.92m, Parke-Bernet, New York, 8 April 1953, no.93 (D.369)



168. Sisley, A., *Chantier à Saint-Mammès*, 1880, 0.64 x 0.90m, Parke-Bernet, New York, 17 October 1973, no.40D (D.370)



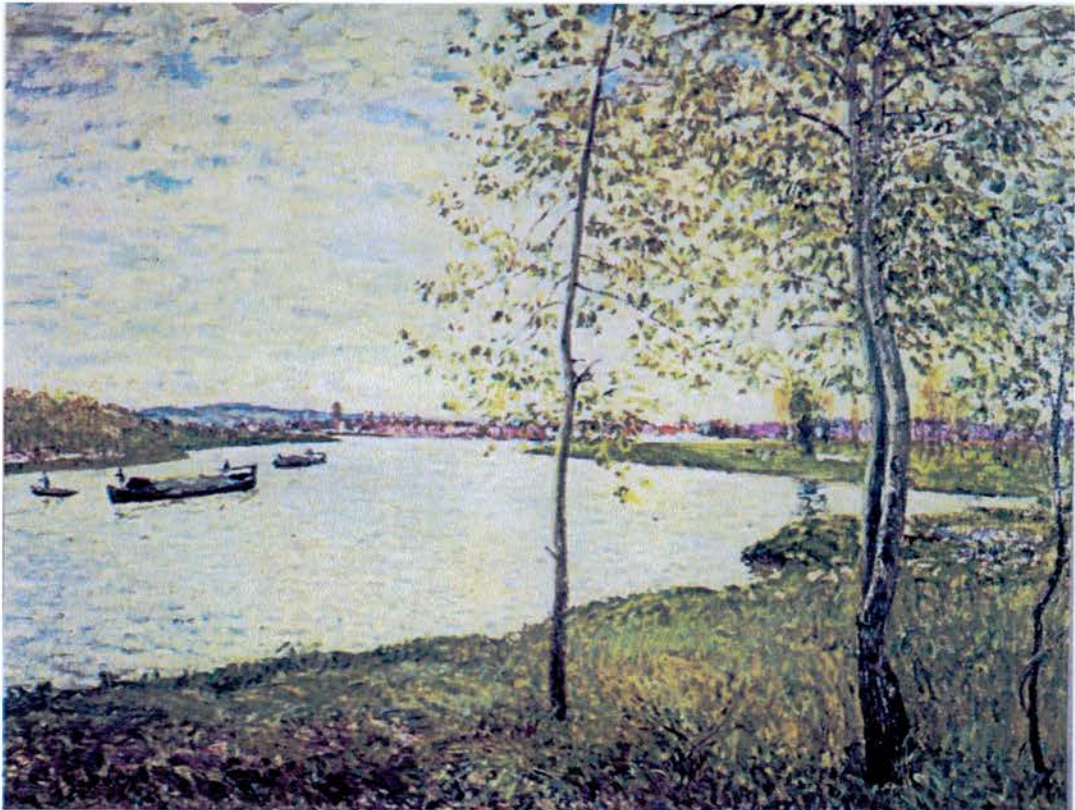
169. Sisley, A., *Saint-Mammès, Canal du Loing*, 1885, 0.46 x 0.53m, Cleveland Museum of Art (D.615)



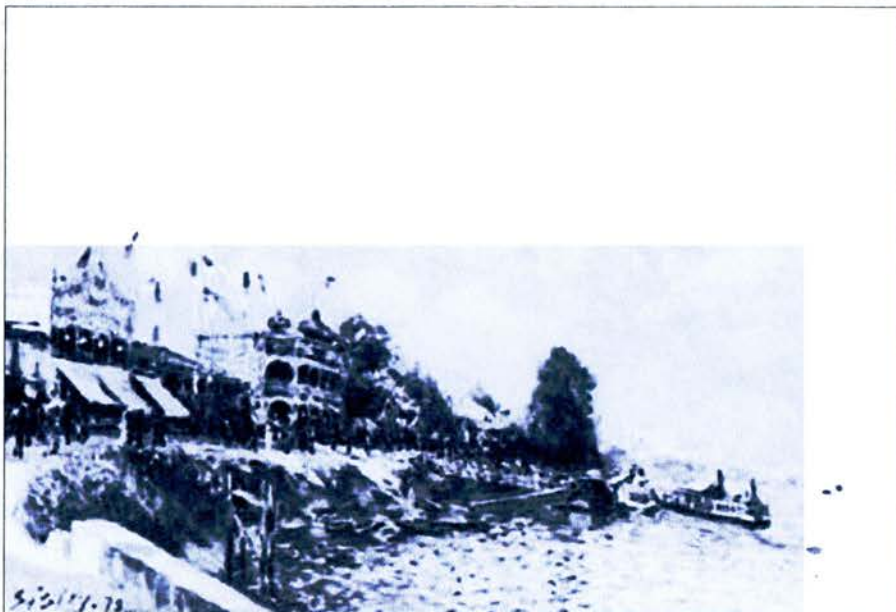
170. Sisley, A., *Sur le Loing à Saint-Mammès*, 1885, 0.46 x 0.55m, private collection (D.573)



171. Sisley, A., *Matin de juin*, 1884, 0.54 x 0.74m, Bridgestone Gallery, Tokyo (D.545)



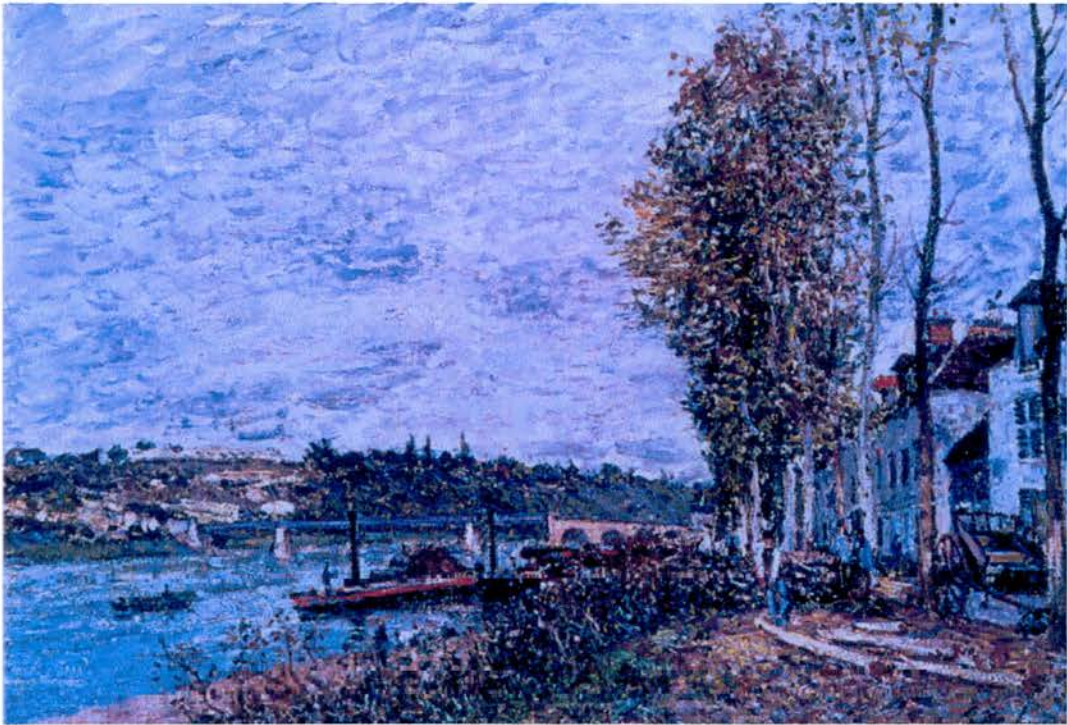
172. Sisley, A., *Environs de Saint-Mammès*, 1880, 0.50 x 0.65m, private collection (D.396)



173. Sisley, A., *La Seine au Point-du-Jour, le quatorze juillet, 1873*, 0.38 x 0.46m, private collection (D.85)



174. Sisley, A., *Paysage près de Moret, 1884*, 0.54 x 0.73m, private collection (D.548)



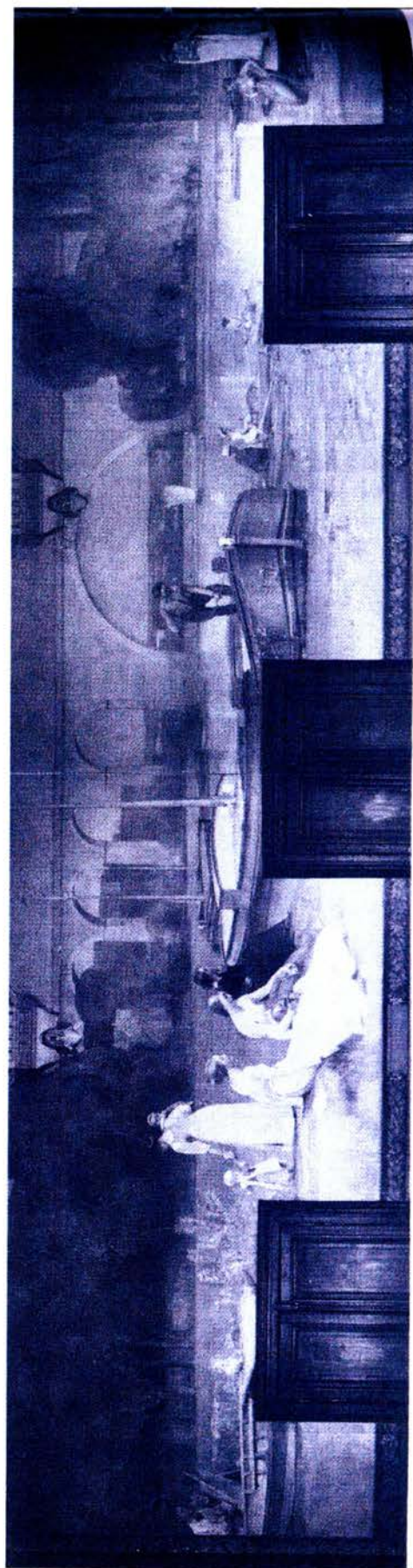
175. Sisley, A., *Jour de brouillard à Saint Mammès*, 1880, 0.55 x 0.74m, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (D.374)



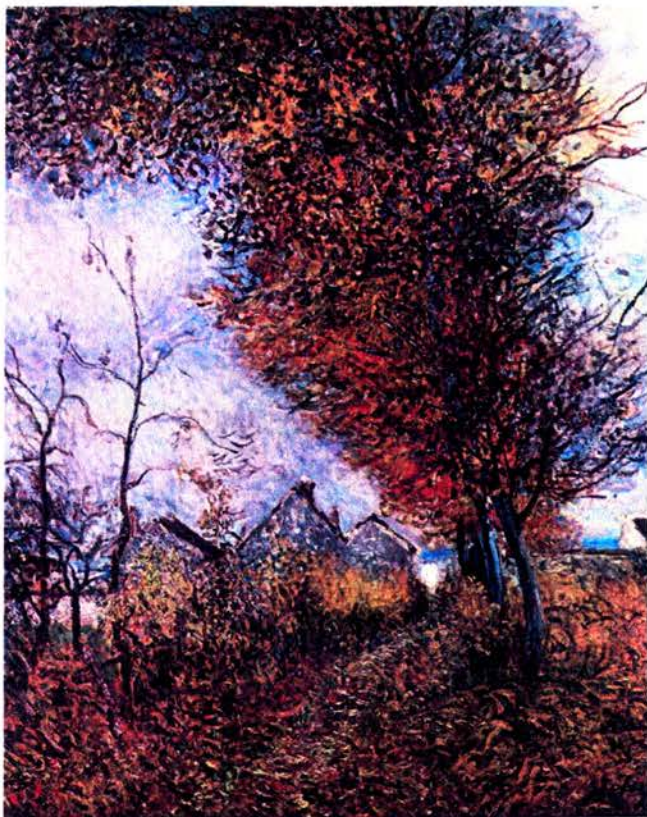
176. Sisley, A., *Le Loing à Saint-Mammès*, 1882, 0.50 x 0.65m, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (D.461)



177. Sisley, A., *Bords de la Seine à By*, 1881, 0.54 x 0.73m, Clark Art Institute, Williamstown (D.392)



178. Karbowsky, A., *Le repos et la navigation*, 1889, 'salle des mariages' Mairie de Nogent-sur-Marne



179. Sisley, A., *Les dernières feuilles d'automne*, 1883, 0.73 x 0.60m, private collection (D.504)



180. Sisley, A., *Garage de bateaux à Saint-Mammès*, 1885, 0.52 x 0.72m, Sotheby's, London, 31 March 1987, no.10 (D.600)



181. Sisley, A., *Matinée de septembre*, c.1887, 0.56 x 0.74m, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Agen (D.692)



182. Sisley, A., *Moret-sur-Loing, la Porte de Bourgogne*, 1891, 0.65 x 0.92m, private collection (D.761)



183. Lepère, A., *Pleine lune à la moisson*, 1885, 1.22 x 2.03m, John Davies Gallery, Stow-on-the-Wold, Summer 2002



184. Lhermitte, L., *La veillée*, 1888, 0.93 x 1.22m, Museum and Art Gallery, Glasgow



185. Gausson, L., *Paysage aux environs de Lagny, l'église de Conches-sur-Gondoire*, 1887, 0.38 x 0.46m, private collection



186. Diéterle, P.-G., *La Valleeuse à Criqueboeuf*, 1887, 1.81 x 2.51m, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rouen



187. Millet, J.-F., *Parc à moutons, clair de lune*, c.1872-1873, 0.40 x 0.57m, Musée d'Orsay, Paris



188. Chaigneau, P., *Crépuscule*, n.d., 0.38 x 0.46m, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rennes



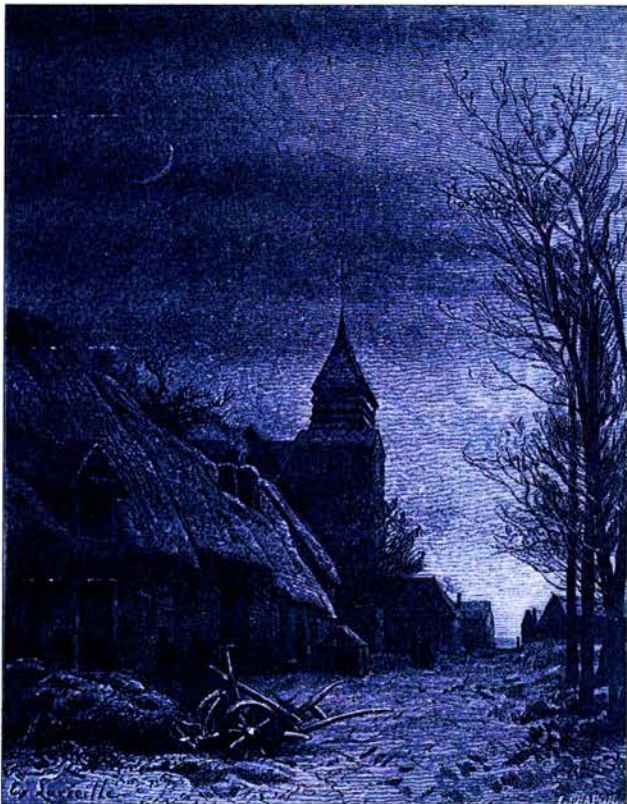
189. Hareux, E.-V., *La rentrée du troupeau à l'étable ; effet de nuit*, 1890, illustration from the *Salon Illustré*, 1890



190. Bail, J.-A., *Une cour de ferme à Champagne (Seine-et-Oise)*, 1890, illustration from the *Salon Illustré*, 1890



191. Pelouse, L., *L'Entrée du village de Cernay*, n.d., 0.61 x 0.91m, Galerie Michael, Los Angeles, April 2004



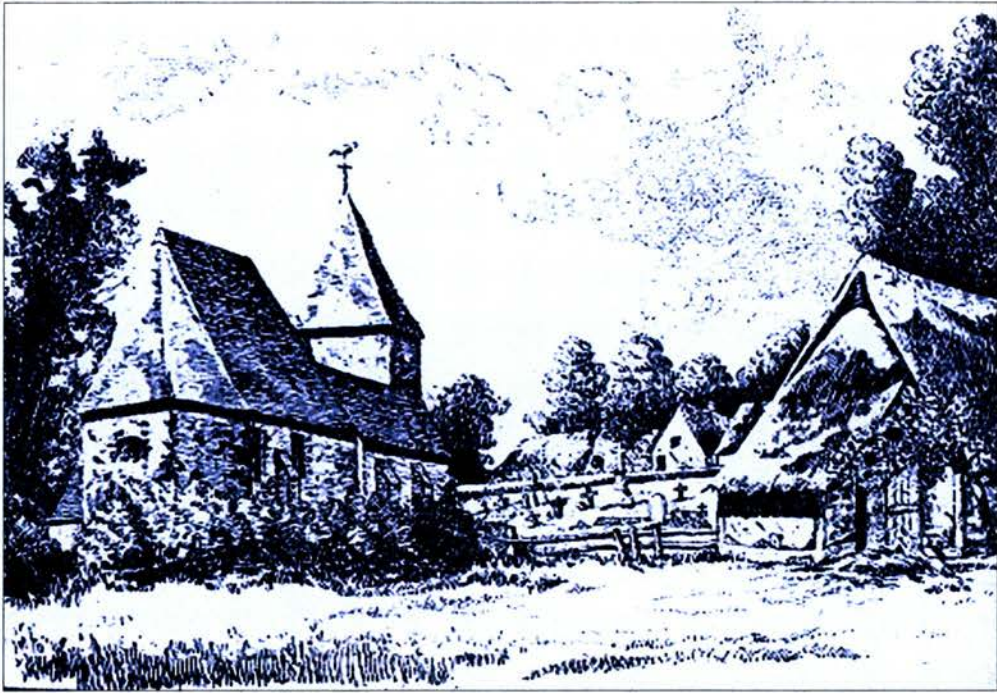
192. Lavieille, E., *Crépuscule en hiver, à Arsy (Oise)*, 1873, illustration from LAFENESTRE, 1873, p55



193. Saintin, H., *Neige en novembre*, 1884, 1.62 x 2.48m, Musée des Jacobins, Morlaix



194. Millet, J.-F., *La plaine de Chailly en hiver*, 1862, 0.62 x 0.73m, Österreichische Galerie, Vienna



195.Allou, R., *L'Église abandonnée*, 1886, illustration from the *Salon illustré*, 1886



196.Lavieille, E., *Country Street*, n.d., 0.43 x 0.37m, Ivey-Selkirk Auctioneers, Missouri, Summer 2002



197. Lavieille, E., *L'Église, effet de nuit*, n.d., 1.00 x 0.81m, Douwes Fine Art, Amsterdam, 1985



198. Lhermitte, L., *La rue Haute de Mont-Saint Père*, 1872, 0.39 x 0.31m, Musée Jean de La Fontaine, Château-Thierry



199. Cazin, J.-C., *La villa Cazin à Équihen*, c.1887, 0.22 x 0.26m, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Reims



200. Cazin, J.-C., *Village d'Artois*, n.d., illustration from FRANTZ, 1911, p.10



201. Cazin, J.C., *Village Street with a Rainbow*, 1880s, 0.60 x 0.73m, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston



202. Cazin, J.-C., *Village de Mun (Seine et Marne)*, n.d., 0.81 x 1.00m, private collection



203. Cazin, J.-C., *Tobie et l'ange*, 1880, 1.86 x 1.42m, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lille



204. Cazin, J.-C., *La journée faite*, 1888, 1.99 x 1.66m, Musée d'Orsay, Paris



205. Cazin, J.-C., *Entrée d'Arbonne*, n.d., 0.46 x 0.56m, Bernheim Jeune, Hotel Drouot, Paris, May 1909



206. Cazin, J.-C., *Henry Poor's Cottage: Full moon*, n.d., 0.76 x 0.91m, Matthieson Gallery, New York, May 2002



207. Cazin, J.-C., *L'Orage*, 1876, 0.90 x 1.67m, Musée d'Orsay, Paris



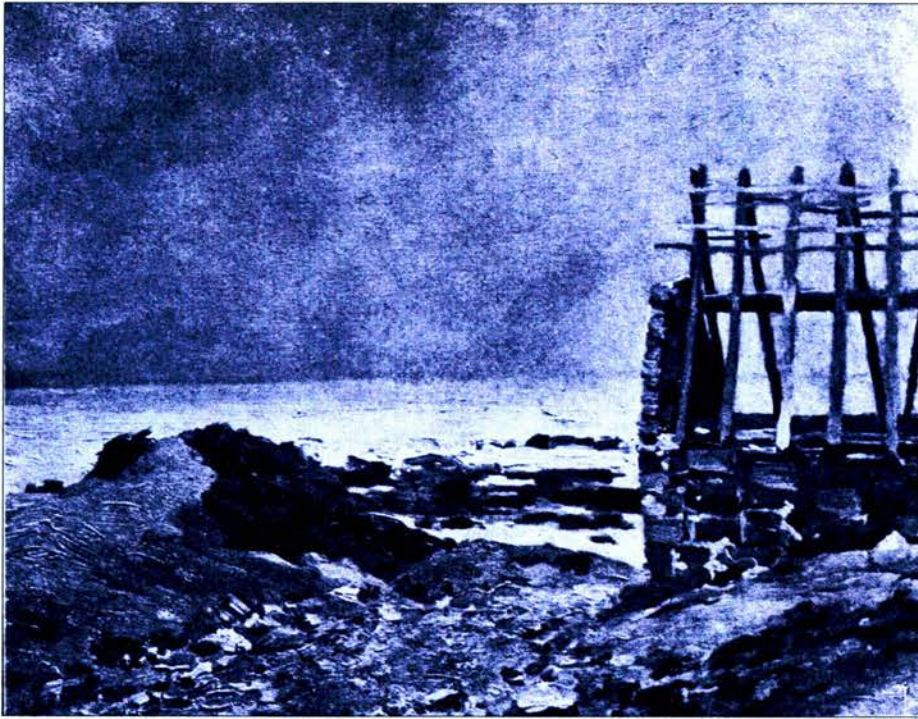
208. Cazin, J.-C., *The Rainbow*, *Achères la Forêt*, 1883, 0.82 x 1.01m, Cleveland Museum of Art



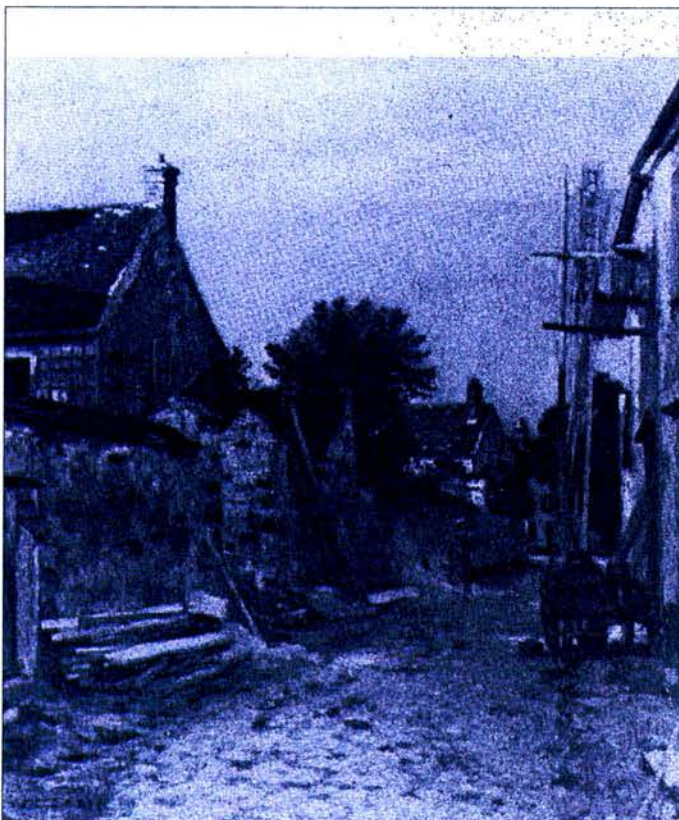
209. Courbet, G., *The Stonebreakers*, 1850, 1.59 x 2.51m, destroyed during World War II



210. Cazin, J.-C., *The Route Nationale at Samer*, n.d., 1.05 x 1.23m, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



211. Cazin, J.-C., *Maison en ruine au bord de la mer*, n.d., illustration from MICHEL, É., 1906, p.508



212. Cazin, J.-C., *Rue de village*, n.d., 0.76 x 0.60m, André Watteau Archives, Paris



213. Cazin, J.-C., *Le village*, n.d., 0.24 x 0.33m, Georges Petit, Hotel Drouot, Paris, 1-2 March, 1920, no.7



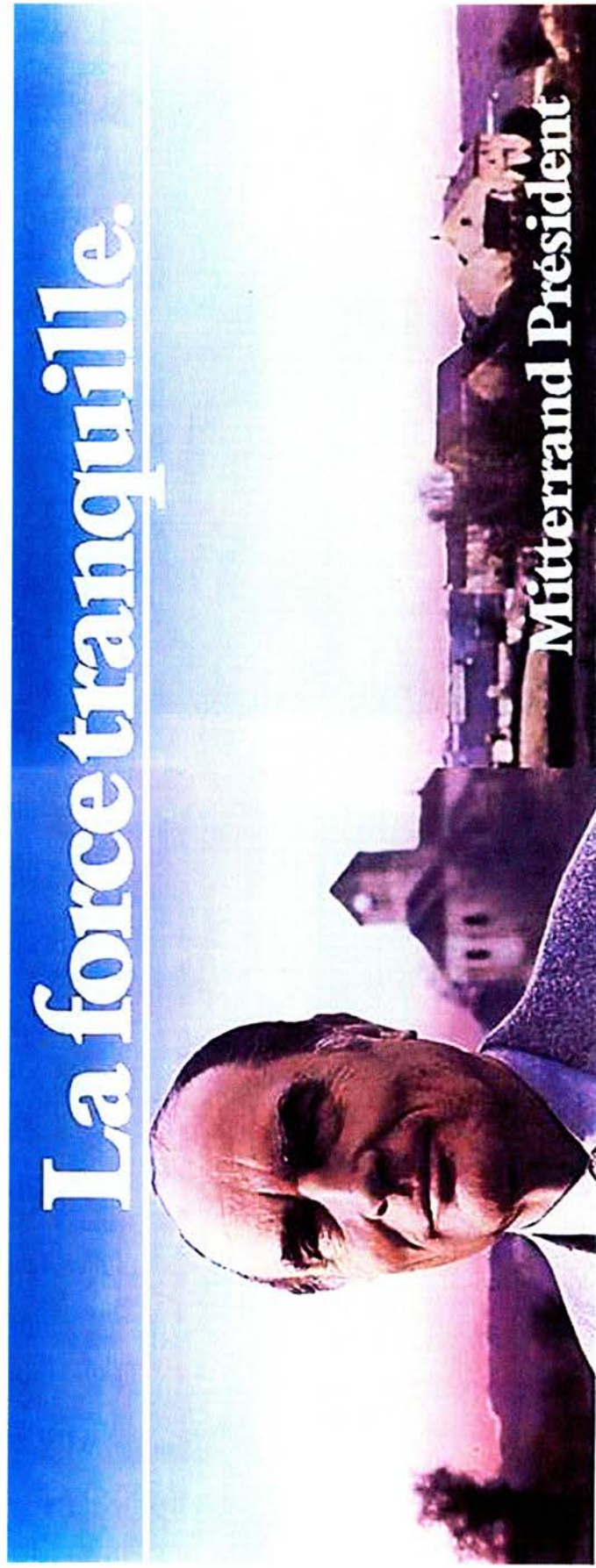
214. Cazin, J.-C., *La sablière*, n.d., 0.59 x 0.81m, Hotel Drouot, Paris, 7 December 1912



215.Cazin, J.-C., *Le départ*, n.d., illustration from BÉNÉDITE, 1901, p.173



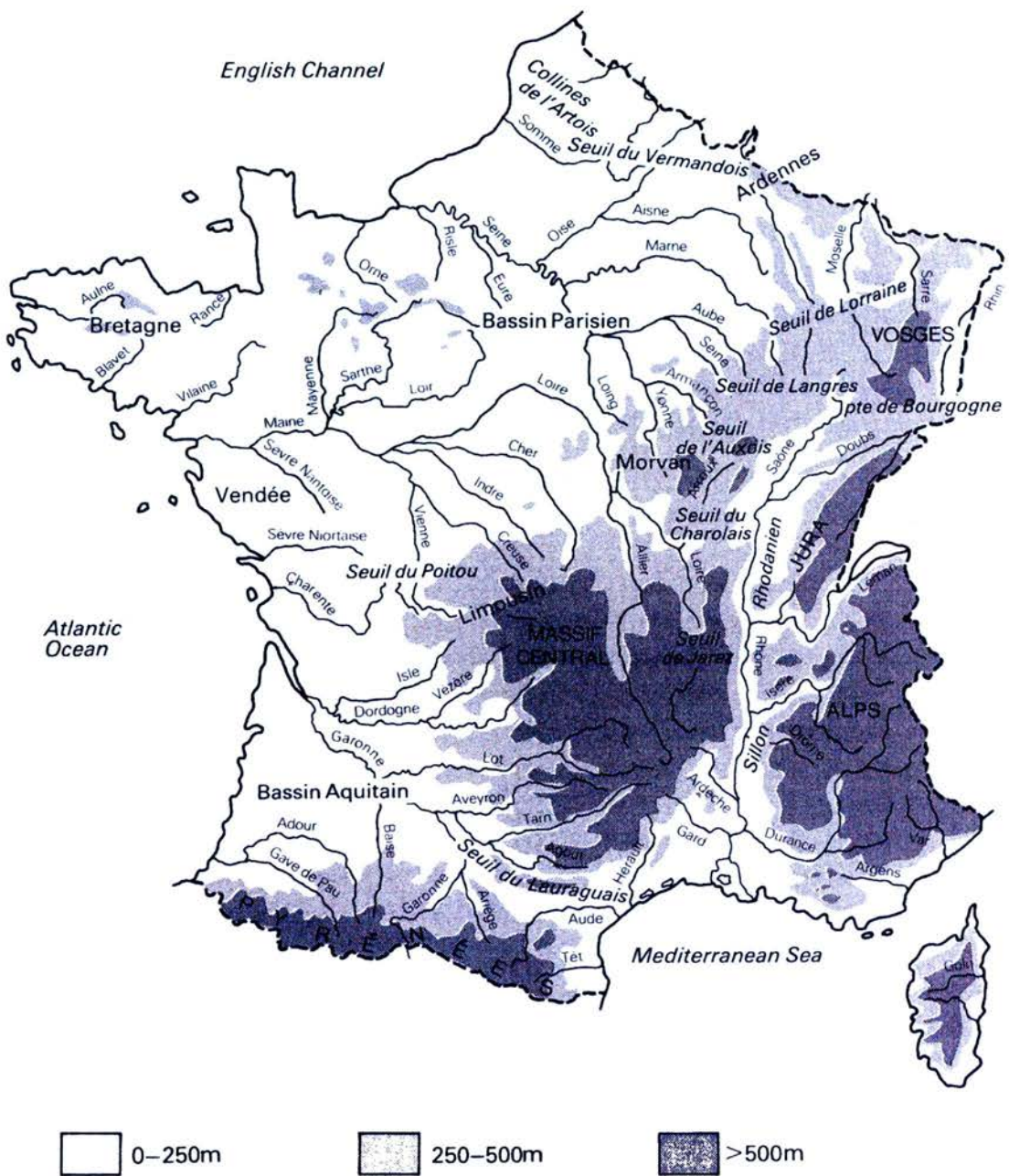
216.Cazin, J.-C., *Sunday evening in a miner's village*, c.1892, 0.81 x 1.17m, Frick Collection, Pittsburgh



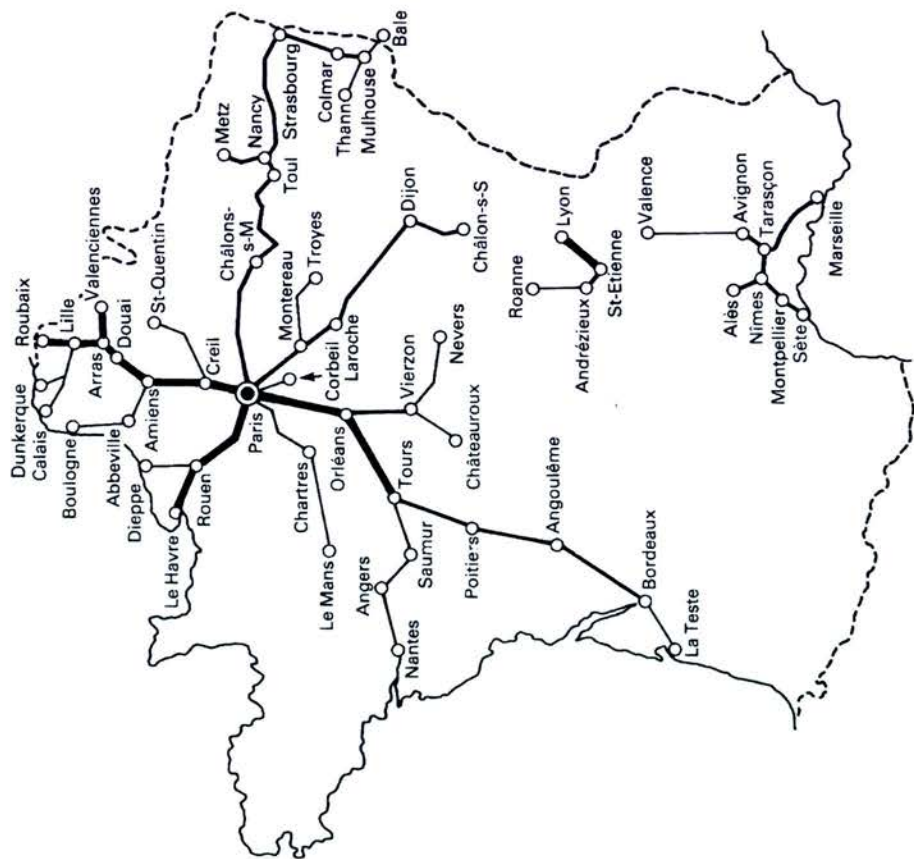
217. *La force tranquille*. Mitterrand Président, electoral campaign poster for François Mitterrand, 1981



1. Historical regions of France (WEBER, 1976, p.xv)



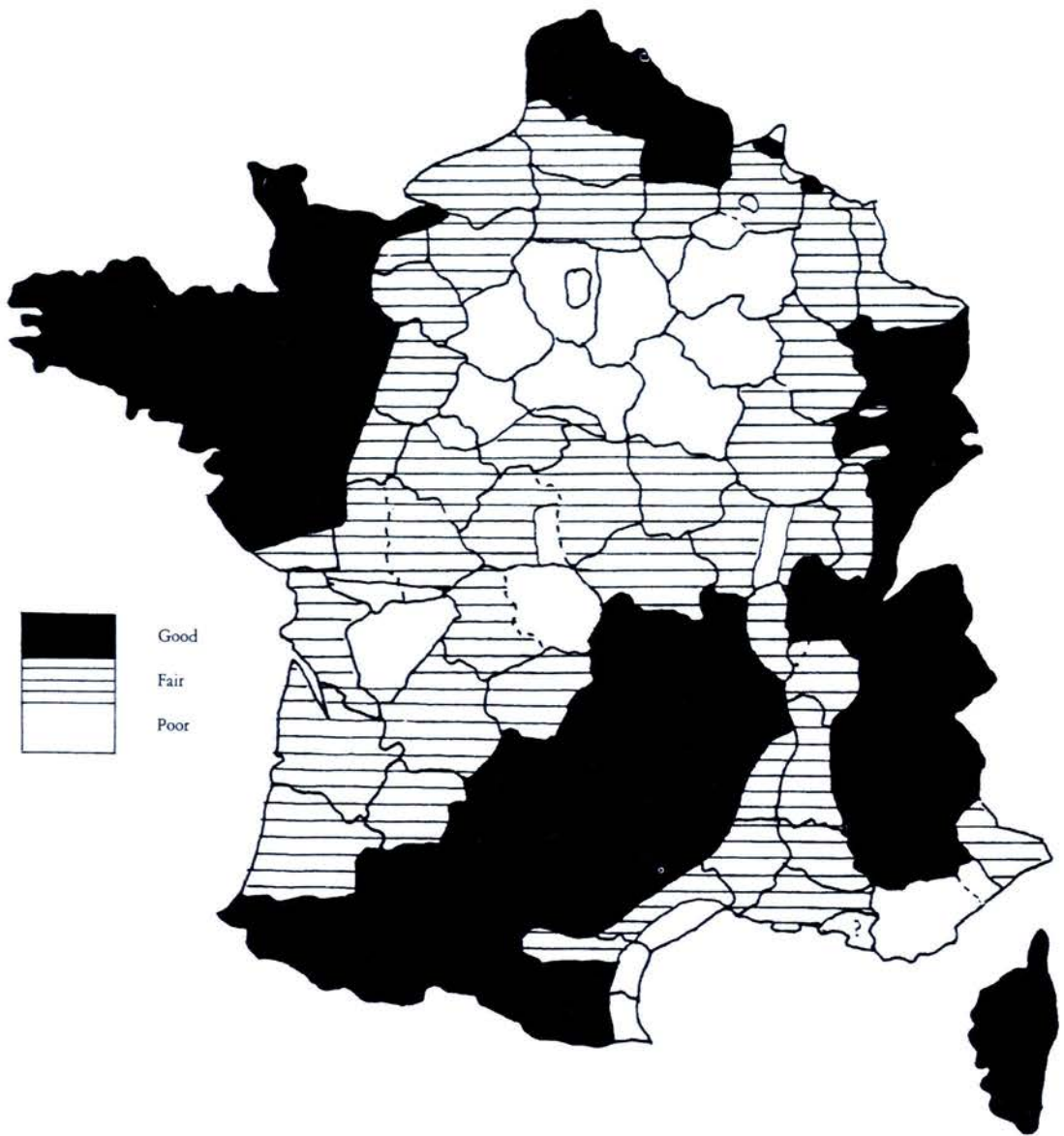
3. Relief map of France (PRICE, 1983, fig.1)



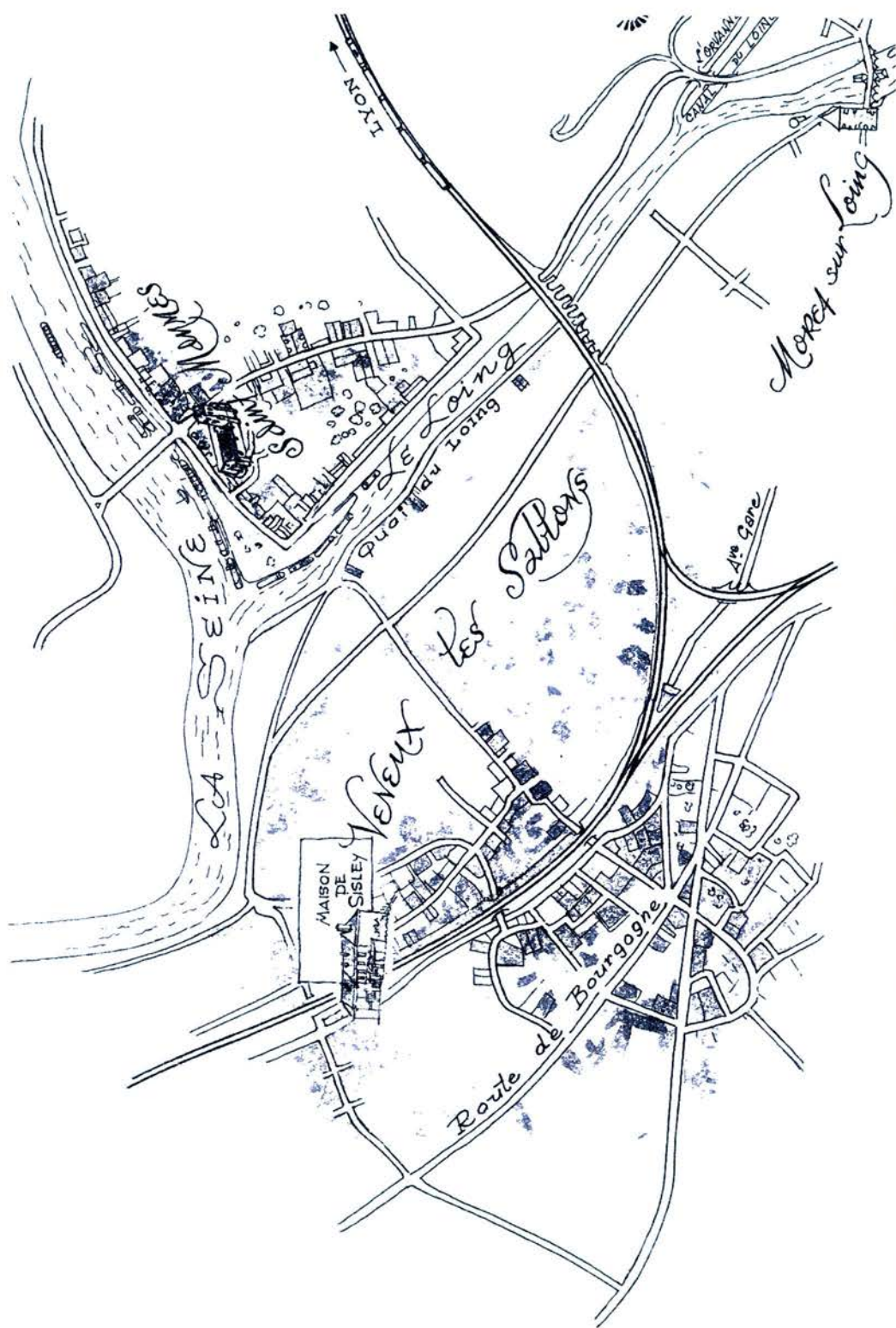
4. Goods traffic by rail, 1854 (PRICE, 1983, fig.7)



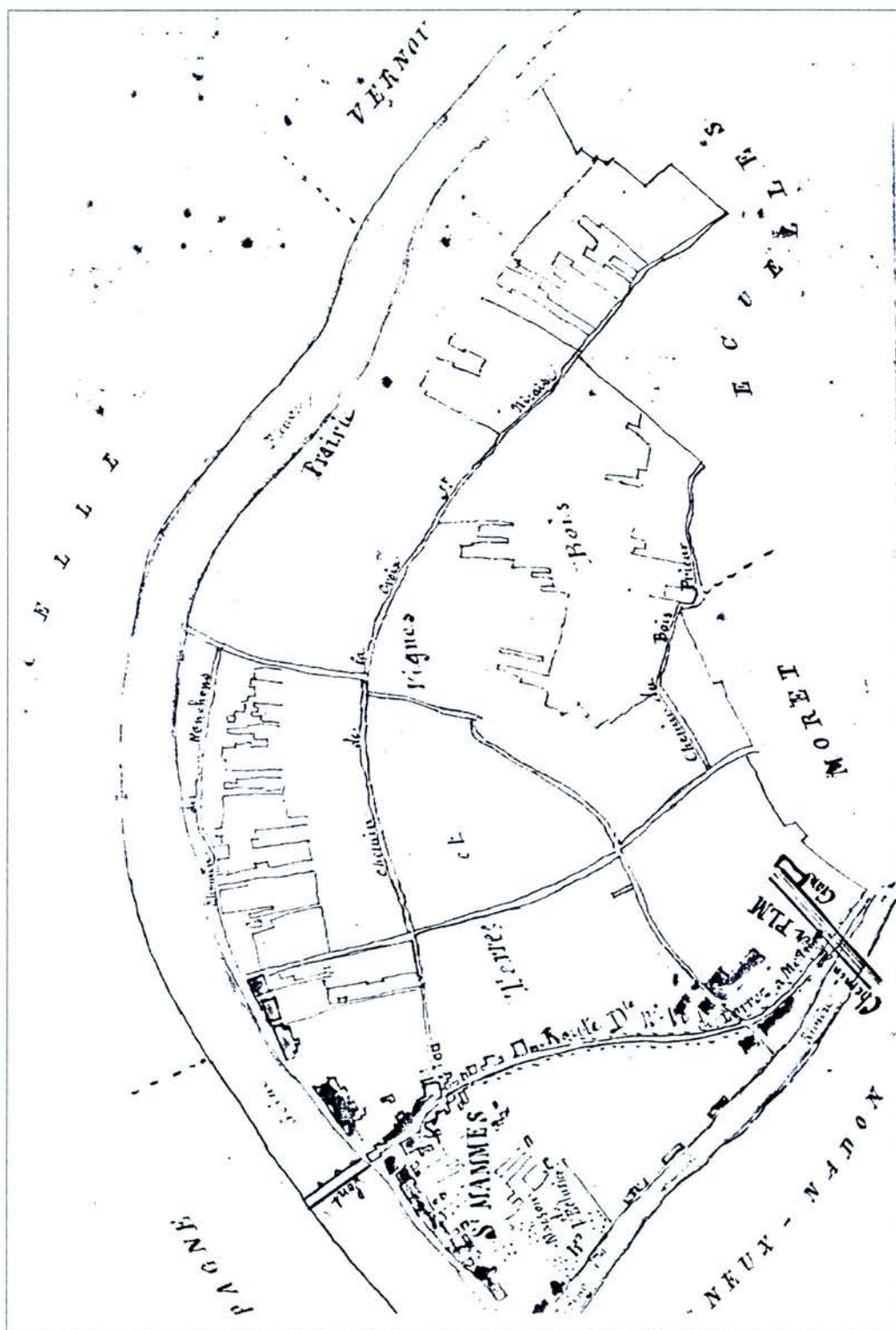
5. Goods traffic by rail, 1878 (PRICE, 1983, fig.8)



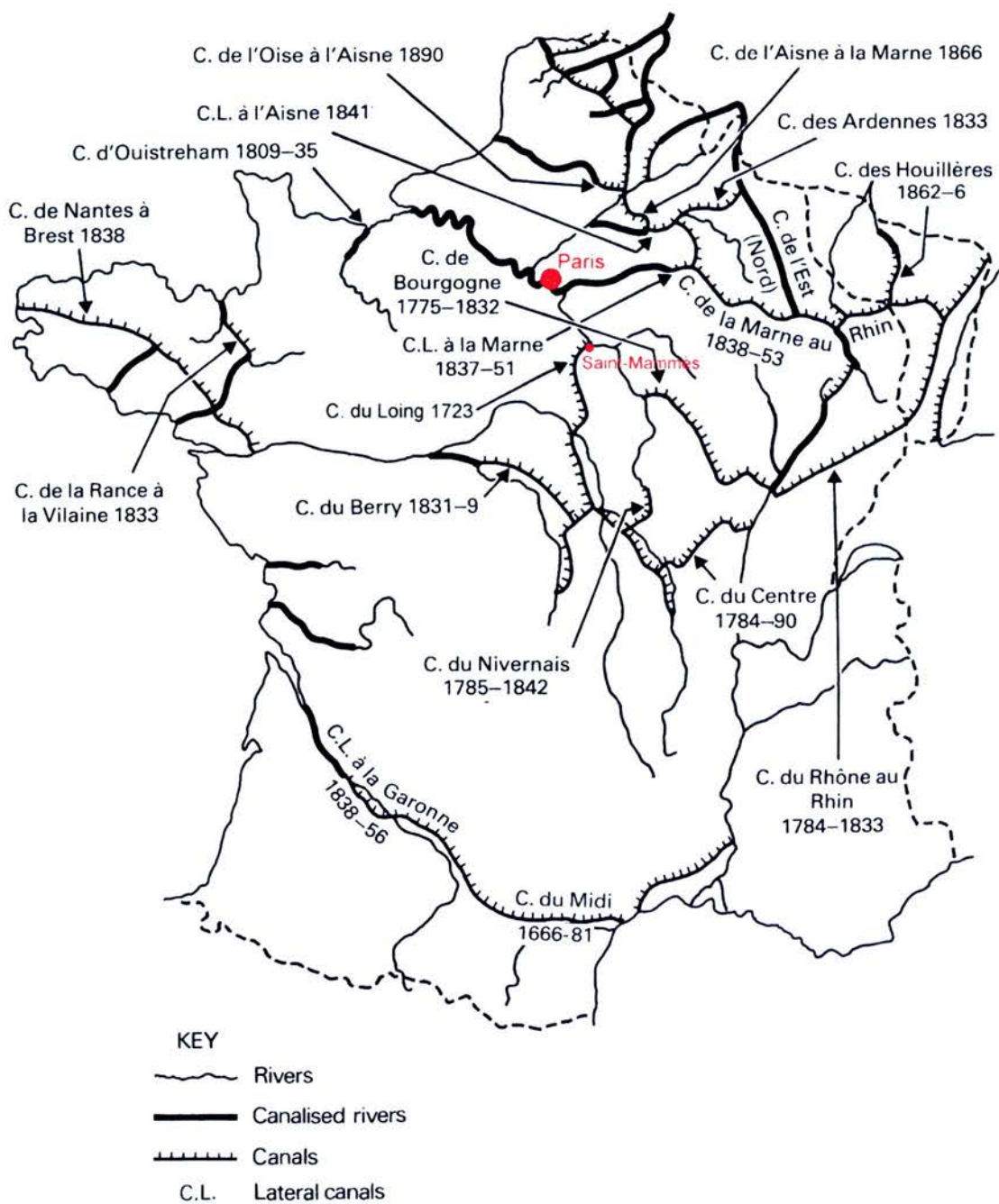
6. *Religious vitality of French dioceses in 1877: estimate of religious practice by bishops and prefects* (GIBSON, 1989, p.172)



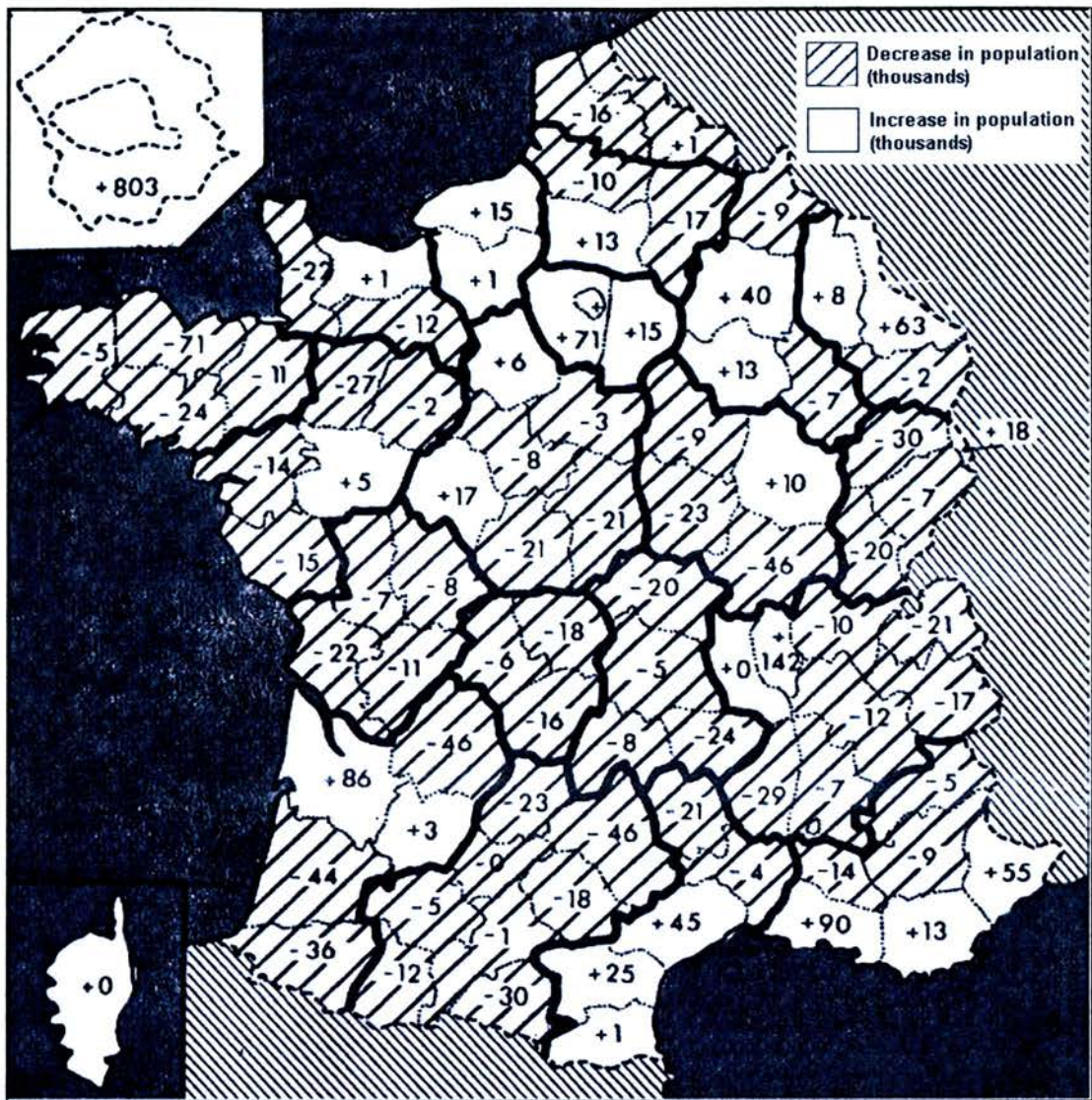
7. *Veneux-les-Sablons and Saint-Mammès* (adapted from AMIS d'ALFRED SISLEY, 1989, pp.14-15.
 Drawn by Pierre Brochard)



8. *Cultivation of land in Saint-Mammès, 1888 (RAUSOIR, 1888, p.2)*

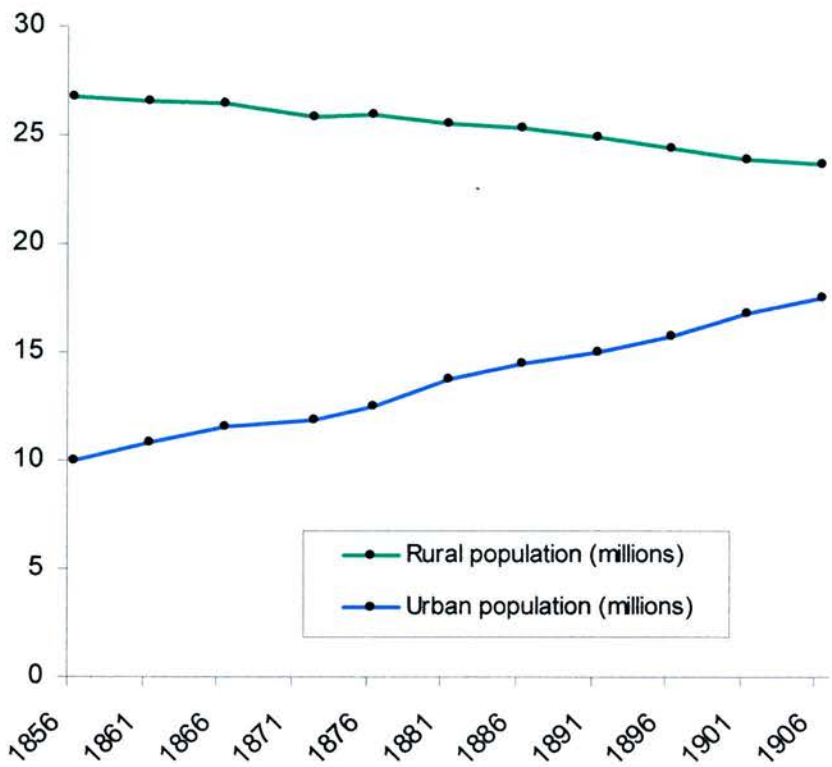


9. *Waterways in the nineteenth century* (adapted from PRICE, 1983, fig.4)

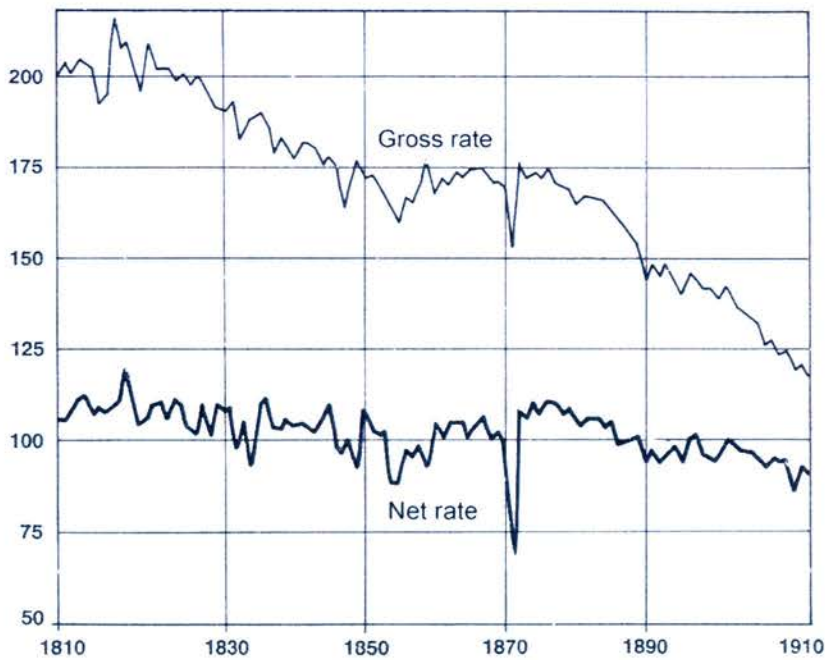


10. *Total migration in the French regions, 1872-1891*(PITIÉ, 1987, p.73)

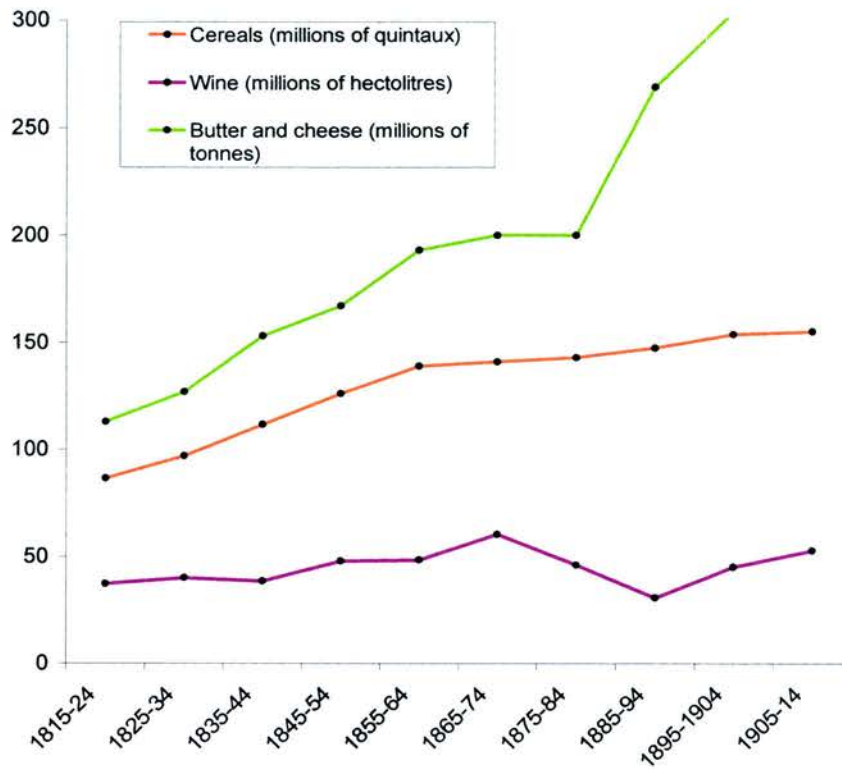
Graphs



1. *Rural and urban population in France, 1861-1906* (statistics from DUPÂQUIER et al, 1988, tables 8 and 9)



2. *Gross and net birth rates in France, 1810-1910* (DUPÂQUIER et al, 1988, fig.161)



3. *Annual average production in cereals, wine, butter and cheese, 1815-1914* (statistics taken from PRICE, 1983, table 55)